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# HOW PAKISTAN GOT DIVIDED

RAO FARMAN ALI KHAN

CELEBRATING 70 YEARS OF PAKISTAN
THE PLATINUM SERIES

Born in Kalanaur, India, **Rao Farman Ali Khan** (1922–2004) was educated in Okara, Ambala, and Lahore. He was commissioned into the 1st Mountain Royal Artillery Regiment in 1942 and served the British Allied Forces at the Burma front and Japan. After opting for the Pakistan Army in 1947, he attended the Staff College at Camberley, UK (1952) and the Gunnery Course at Fort Leavenworth, USA (1956).

After various important staff and command assignments, Rao Farman Ali was posted to East Pakistan, where he served in Dacca as Commander Artillery 14 Division (1967–69), and as Advisor on Civil-Political Affairs to successive governors (1969–71). He was promoted to Major General in 1970. Following the surrender at Dacca (1971), Rao Farman remained prisoner of war (POW) in India until 1974. After repatriation, he was appointed Director General Military Training (DGMT).

Later, as MD Fauji Foundation (1975–85), Rao Farman turned the company into a commercial giant by strategically redirecting it towards the fertilizer and hydrocarbon sector, setting up Fauji Fertilizer Company (FFC). He retired from the army in 1976.

He also served as Federal Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources (1981–83).

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Dedicated to

the forgotten shaheeds of the 1971 war
who lost their lives in defence of
the integrity of Pakistan

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# Foreword

THE FIRST EDITION OF OUR FATHER'S BOOK WAS PUBLISHED IN 1992. The Urdu version was published in 1999, to which he added a second preface.

In this version, we have endeavoured to supplement the facts stated in the book with references and appendices which include archived newspaper reports, letters, and citations of other published works on East Pakistan. The quality of the illustrations of the maps has been improved, and the pertinent sections of the Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report, declassified in 2000, are included.

***

The Bengalis fought their 'war of independence', and some still harbour hatred towards us for the perceived scale of killings. The Indians fought us for their long-term regional objectives and national interest. But what about us? Our national interest demanded projecting our side of the story, the pain of the loss of not only our dead, but with it a part of our country and our national honour. The deafening silence and our failure to respond to the allegations made by India and Bangladesh suggest acquiescence on our part.

It was left to foreign commentators to speak up for our armed forces. 'Despite all these overwhelming advantages, the war did not go as smoothly and easily for the Indian

Army…,' wrote Sisson and Rose, and came to the balanced judgment that 'the Pakistanis fought hard and well; the Indian Army won an impressive victory'. Sarmila Bose wrote: 'There is much for Pakistan to come to terms with what happened in 1971. But the answers do not lie in unthinking vilification of the fighting men who performed so well in the war against such heavy odds in defence of the national policy.' She continues, '… The Eastern Command did not create the conflict, nor were they responsible for the failure of the political and diplomatic process. … it is shocking, therefore, to discover that they were not received with honour by their nation on their return. … Rather, in failing to honour them, the nation dishonours itself.'

Successive Pakistani governments failed to correct the 'one-sided story' of the army's ineptitude, or to clarify the purported scale of atrocities that has forever left a black mark on Pakistan. It allowed India to mask its contrived aggression as a 'war of liberation'—aggression against another UN member is against the UN Charter, to which both India and Pakistan are signatories. After the defeat, our government in power, and the military leadership under it, tacitly let the whole army be maligned, shamed, and abused; the factors responsible for the debacle and dismemberment of the country as proposed by the Hamoodur Rahman Commission were kept under wraps, and the individuals identified were never tried. No one remembers the sacrifices of thousands of Armed Forces' personnel, or the East Pakistanis who were slaughtered by the Mukti Bahini and other rebel forces for supporting 'One Pakistan'.

India won the war due to overwhelming ground force, air superiority, tanks, and artillery, aided and abetted by the Mukti Bahini, and supported by the local population. It fell on Field Marshal Gen. Manekshaw to laud the Pakistani army. In an interview with the BBC, he said, 'The Pakistan Army in East Pakistan fought very gallantly, but they had no chance. They were 1,000 miles away from their base. I had eight or nine months to make my preparation. I had a superiority of almost 15 to 1. They just had no chance, but fought very gallantly.'

The parents, wives, daughters, and sons of other prisoners of war, like us, not only grieved for the loss of half the country but also endured negative remarks by people about the soldiers in East Pakistan. It was not unusual to hear crass statements like 'they should have died rather than surrender', or '90,000 men surrendered, the highest ever surrender of troops anywhere in the world'. No one bothered to honour the 4,500 troops who had died in battle, or correct the actual number of troops surrendering, which was about 45,000; more than 50,000 were civilians, including women and children.

Did anyone try to correct the perception that the atrocities were exaggerated and not one-sided? Statistics are important as they differentiate between the tragedy of a civil war and the accusation of genocide. We must not absolve the perpetrators of the crimes committed, whomsoever they were, on any side of the conflict. But we cannot continue to play the blame game either. Armies enact state policies, and individuals are driven by ideologies of nationalism—both are initiators and drivers

of the conflict of war. We must move beyond easy labels and narratives, both of 'the self' and 'the other'.

This book is dedicated to the forgotten *shaheeds* that lie in unmarked graves, both troops and civilians, who died defending their country and a united Pakistan, as well as the innocent Bengalis and Biharis who fell prey to the vengeance of the uprising forces as a consequence of neutrality—thereby, considered disloyal to their cause.

*Yeh kaun sakhi hain jin ke lahu ki ashrafiaan, chhan chhan, chhan chhan,*
*dharti ke peham piyaase kashkol mein dhalti jaati hain kashkol ko bharti hain*

Who are these benevolent youth the gold coins of their blood clink clink, clink clink,
the ever thirsty contours of the land
lets them mould into the begging bowl and fill up the begging bowl.

Lastly, no relationship is one-dimensional. There were many shared families and friendships that were irrevocably broken. There was a huge sense of loss, sorrow, and pain at losing an integral part of us, both as a family, and as a nation. Many of us wept, and still mourn for the manner of it, for the senseless loss of lives, for the families whose lives changed forever, and for the wound that may never heal.

**Sumaira, Shaheen, Shafiq Farman, Nasreen, Qaiser**
2016

# Preface

THE FIRST EDITION OF THIS BOOK WAS PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH in 1992. The Urdu translation was published in 1999. In the seven-year gap, many comments were published regarding the original book and the events of 1971. The author took the Urdu publication as an opportunity to answer the myriad of questions, opinions, interviews, articles, and speeches that were raised relating to the events, the conduct of war, and the role of various individuals—including his own—that eventually led to the tragic dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971.

While the book answered most of the questions that were later asked—either by the public or written in articles by intellectuals or raised in speeches by politicians—they remain scattered throughout. Since some might find connecting the dots and finding the answers to their questions a bit difficult, the author decided to consolidate his response to the questions and comments to facilitate an understanding of the events.

*(Translated from the Urdu Edition of the Book Published in 1999)*

**The Muslims of Bengal (later comprising East Pakistan), had voted to be part of Pakistan. So what were the reasons for their change of heart, beginning with disenchantment, progressing into a lack of trust, and**

**then translating into emotional and ideological distance? How did it lead to hatred, war, and enmity? Why did it happen when 95 per cent of the Bengalis (East Bengal) had voted for Pakistan?**

In my opinion, mistakes were made on both sides. This breakup had several reasons:

There was a thousand-mile distance between the two provinces, separated by an enemy. There was no people-to-people contact; the people of East Pakistan had a sense of deprivation and felt that West Pakistan treated the Eastern Wing as though it was their colony. Inept political leadership, lack of a constitution, lack of democracy, the imposition of consecutive martial laws, and the lack of senior Bengali officers (to give them a sense of power-sharing) in the Pakistan Army were additional reasons. That the West Pakistani officers behaved like rulers didn't help either. Other reasons included the historical backwardness of East Pakistan and the improper projection of this by the East Pakistani political leadership, West Pakistani leaders' 'cold shoulder' attitude, their dictatorial behaviour towards East Pakistan, the language disparity, and the rise of Bengali nationalism.

**Was a political solution possible?**

Yes, a political solution was possible. The events of 1971 would not have happened and East and West Pakistan would have remained 'One Pakistan', but that required selfless love for the country, and total absence of self-interest and personal gain. The 1970 election was a political solution itself if the results had been accepted and a democratic process adopted. Unfortunately, the two

majority leaders of East and West Pakistan did what they felt was best for them; not what was best for Pakistan. Instead of adopting a policy of conciliation, they adopted a policy of confrontation and considered their own self-interest greater than the interest of Pakistan.

**Was military action absolutely necessary?**
No. If the political leadership of East and West Pakistan had treated each other better, reaching a settlement or consensus with tolerance and the spirit of sacrifice, there would have been no need for military action.

Military action became necessary after the West Pakistani leadership refused to go to Dacca (Dhaka). The president (Yahya Khan) postponed the National Assembly session for drafting the constitution without giving a new date for the next session; a rebellion was triggered in East Pakistan, and an unconstitutional government was installed. There were two options: either the army should have returned to West Pakistan, or an attempt should have been made to reinstall a constitutional government (based on the democratically elected assembly).

The actual injustice was meted out it by the West Pakistani leadership—they had created an environment that led to East Pakistan's confrontation with the army, both of whom suffered. As a result, Pakistan was dismembered and a 'new Pakistan' was created. If the assembly session of 3 March 1970 had been held, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's party would not have rebelled and the secession of 1971 would not have happened.

Additionally, some people in the army feel that immediate political action right after the military action

could have controlled the situation. The truth is that the impact of any positive political action takes a long time to change people's mindset. There is no magic wand that can be waved to instantly make a positive impact on the thoughts and feelings of a nation, nor can one achieve this by flipping a switch as one would an electric bulb. Hearts must be won, and that takes a long time, especially where people have been affected by military action. For example, even after a child is beaten, he rejects all reconciliatory attempts by his mother. And one talks of presenting a political solution to a people after military action? Impossible. Especially since the only solution acceptable to them was that the next Prime Minister of Pakistan be from East Pakistan. But, a prime minister from East Pakistan was not acceptable to the people of West Pakistan. Even Noorul Amin, who had won the elections, was unacceptable to them.

The solution was to accept Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his party as the majority party of Pakistan. Unfortunately, we in West Pakistan persistently stated that there were two majority parties in the country.

The fact is, we did attempt some political action in East Pakistan, but it was small and insignificant, and therefore ineffective. In fact, some attempts were counterproductive. For example:

- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was captured to facilitate a political solution through discussions with the West Pakistani leadership. Instead of negotiations, President Yahya Khan and his advisors sent him to jail and filed a case of treason against him, later handing him a death sentence. All the while, Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman had been telling his lawyer, Brohi, that a political solution was possible.

- Recommended amnesty for military units, consisting of East Pakistanis who were still in East Pakistan, but the military commanders ridiculed and laughed off the suggestion.
- Amnesty was announced for civilians in East Pakistan who were against the government but were either abroad or in the country through a directive from General Tikka. But the GHQ issued a letter which distorted it in a way that killed its spirit.
- After the appointment of a civilian governor in September 1970, a general amnesty was announced again. This was too little too late—India had already been given sufficient time to complete its preparation for invading East Pakistan.
- In my personal capacity I tried, and Begum Suleiman Suhrawardy helped to send as many East Pakistani MNAs as possible to West Pakistan (to increase contact between the two Wings and somehow restore normalcy between the two peoples).
- Whenever an East Pakistani political leader was arrested by the army for unjustifiable reasons, we rallied to have him released.

All this was in an attempt to win over at least some of the political leadership in East Pakistan.

Even though the Bengalis had turned against West Pakistan prior to any aggression, the military action added fuel to the fire, and after six months of guerrilla warfare,

the strategically significant political decision of handing over power of both Wings to Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was the only option left. But that would have upset the majority party leadership in West Pakistan.

**Was it a military defeat or a political one?**

It is without hesitation that I say the defeat was a result of Pakistan's national political leadership's ineptitude, personal ego, and pursuit of personal gains. After the elections, both Mujib and Bhutto displayed a complete lack of political wisdom and focused solely on the goal of achieving power. They were fixated on achieving their own personal objective over that of the nation. Since there could not be two prime ministers in one country, by creating two countries, both became prime minister.

The Pakistan Army suffered a military defeat because 80 per cent of East Pakistanis had become its enemy and allied with India. The Pakistan Army was a small one, and reinforcements had to leave behind larger weapons in West Pakistan. When the local population is against the army—which is without tanks, artillery, or aircraft support—defeat is inevitable.

Even at the very end of the conflict, however, a ceasefire could have been obtained from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) if conciliatory resolution, coupled with a political solution, had been accepted. But a military defeat was what the political leadership of West Pakistan desired.

**Question of forgiveness?**

A while back, people began saying that we should apologize to the Bengalis and ask for their forgiveness. I

believe that in the midst of a war, forgiveness should be sought by both sides.

I know that the world media ignores what happened between 2 March 1971 and 25 March 1971, when a legal government—most people forget the fact that it was a legitimate one—was replaced by an illegal government. There was an annihilation of Bihari settlements. In Chittagong, all West Pakistan Railways officers were executed. Never before had unit members murdered their colleagues the way the rebellious units of the East Pakistan Regiment and the East Pakistan Rifles executed their own junior commissioned and non-commissioned officers. In Mymensingh, Bihari children were asked to dig graves for their own parents. In Brahmanbariya, severed heads of Bihari children were stuck on walls (the government suppressed this information at the time out of fear of reprisals against Bengalis in West Pakistan till the release of the White Paper in August 1971, thereby creating doubts over the credibility of the information).

Excesses—and in some places—unforgivable atrocities, were committed at our end. But most reports provided inflated descriptions of events perpetuated by the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan. The highly exaggerated reports said that 20 lakh (one million) women were raped and about 30 lakh (three million) men were executed. Such news is usually spread by guerrilla and rebel armies to gain sympathies of the general population and the world.

However, as in any war, especially a civil war, atrocities were committed by both parties and both

are to blame for what happened—therefore both should apologize.

**Did I have two hundred Bengalis killed on 16 December 1971?**

I was trying to get Mujib to become the Prime Minister of Pakistan (after his election victory) and wanted the Bengalis to get their rights. I also helped in getting Bengali political leaders freed (Ata ur Rahman, Jadu Mian, Zahoor ul Islam) and asked for inquiries into unlawful Bengali killings (Saeed Hasan). The senior officers in West Pakistan considered me a pro-Bengali officer. On 9 December 1971 I opposed Gen. Niazi's scheme to arrest selected people. I ask you this: how can such a person issue an order for the people to be killed?

Additionally, as the governor whose advisor I was had resigned, by 13 December 1970, I too ceased to have any authority or responsibility—I had just one orderly subordinate, and no one else was reporting to me. How then was it possible for me to kill two hundred people? I think these people were either executed by the Indian Army (as they had entered Dacca during the day on 16 December), or by the *razakars*, who may have been guarding them. I do not know where they were held, or who was guarding them.

Since I was number six in order of seniority, there was no question of me authorizing any unwarranted action in East Pakistan. I was one of the most junior generals in East Pakistan during the 1971 war and had no troops under my command.

It is also important to talk about the unfortunate and

regrettable murder of the BBC reporter, who describes General Niazi as a friend in his book. The fact is that the BBC published a news item stating Gen. Niazi had run away from East Pakistan and Gen. Farman had taken over the command [of the] troops. This news, of course, was incorrect. Gen. Niazi was very upset and had his staff officer, Brig. Siddiqui call and ask me to contact the reporter, and warn him against sending such factually incorrect news back to the BBC. I telephoned the correspondent and told him that he should be cautious and not have such news broadcast. I was trying to help him. If the reporter was killed, it must have been done on the instructions of someone who was angry with him. The BBC reporter had done me no wrong.

**Did we have to go through the ignominy of surrender? Or was there any other way out of the situation we were in?** Yes, there was a way to avoid surrender. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) could have provided us with a political solution for a ceasefire. What would have happened after the ceasefire can be understood from the 1948 ceasefire in Kashmir and the events since. To date, the occupying Indian forces are in Kashmir and there is no political solution in sight. Once there is ceasefire, it is difficult to restart a war.

Surrender is the most ignominious and degrading outcome of any war. We should have avoided it at all costs. The Governor of East Pakistan and I tried for a ceasefire but were not successful as all attempts were subverted by people who wanted the army defeated in East Pakistan so they could acquire power in West Pakistan.

**What about the 7 December signal sent from the Governor House?**

Gen. Niazi in his book has tried to insinuate that the 7 December signal sent by the Governor did not present the real situation of the war. If his assertion is true, why then after just two days i.e. on 9 December did it [the situation] become so critical that he became completely helpless, and by the 10th he was forced to proclaim that 'we are capable of fighting for only two more days'. A lie will get you caught.

Misleading reports and misrepresentation lead to bad decisions. If the 7th December report, which had proposed a political solution to the United Nations, had been acted upon, a ceasefire could have been implemented well in time. Unfortunately, after the situation became untenable, instead of a political solution resulting in a ceasefire, the result was surrender.

**What about the 10 December signal to the United Nations allegedly sent by you? Also, what about the signal asking for a ceasefire?**

There is a lot of misinformation and the Pakistani government (Yahya Khan and Bhutto) fanned the impression that I was behind the 10 December 1971 telegram to the United Nations, and had done so without the government's permission. The truth is provided in this book.

The signal was sent by the governor as advised by the president (signals presented in the book) and after the concurrence of Gen. Niazi. This signal was drafted by the then Chief Secretary, Muzaffar Hussain, without my

involvement, and with the agreement of Gen. Niazi and other senior officers at the army headquarters in Dacca.

There is another misconception that the last signal that Niazi sent for the ceasefire was sent by both the civil and military wings of the government. That is absolutely incorrect. As the signal was sent through the American Embassy, the American standard operating procedure requires authentication of the sender's signatures by a person known to the sender. I signed the signal only to authenticate Gen. Niazi's signature—nothing more. As this last signal was sent after the governor's resignation, I had no authority to act on behalf of the government.

**Major General Rao Farman Ali Khan (Retd)**
4 September 1999

# 1

# Changing Pattern of Muslim Bengal

IT WAS IN MARCH 1944 THAT I CAME IN CONTACT WITH BENGAL. I was commissioned into the army in September 1943—four years after the outbreak of the Second World War. After undergoing extensive training in jungle warfare, I was asked to join my unit, 7 Field Regiment Artillery, located on Ramree Island off the coast of Burma. We had to pass through Calcutta on our way to Akyab and then on to Ramree Island. We stayed in Calcutta for about a week, and witnessed events that still haunt me.

Calcutta at the time presented a horrible spectacle. The scars of the debilitating famine of 1942 were still visible. Heaps of filth were found all over the place, with countless human skeletons piled on them. On these heaps were vultures, picking out bits of food thrown away by the affluent foreigners. Dust-laden, rickety trams created a lot of noise as they moved. The whole atmosphere was disgusting and I could, from what I saw in March 1944, form an idea of how extensive and devastating a toll on life the famine had taken. Adding to the horrors of famine was the sickening disregard for life that the British and American troops passing through Calcutta displayed. They had plenty of money to throw around, which they probably did because of an overpowering desire for enjoyment before possible death. The contrast in

attitudes towards life and possessions between the locals and foreigners was appalling.

From Calcutta, we made a long and arduous journey to Comilla by train. Since there was no bridge over the Jamuna, we had to cross the river in a motorboat which took almost six hours. The train journey that followed took us over an area that three years later became East Pakistan. Although we could not see much because we were travelling at night, we heard a lot of voices and noises. Throughout the night, even while the train was moving, we heard a constant chanting of 'Sahib, Bakhshish. Sahib, Bakhshish'. In those days, the Comilla Cantonment was called Mainamati Cantonment, named after the hill on which it was located. At the time, it was not much of a cantonment, consisting of improvised bamboo huts and tents. The town itself was full of ponds, mostly multi-purpose pools of water—used for rearing fish, washing clothes and utensils, bathing, and supplying drinking water. They were also used as convenient lavatories. One could see raised platforms jutting out into the water with a covered approach from the houses. The living conditions underwent a drastic transformation after Pakistan came into being. Comilla became the best cantonment in Pakistan—well laid out, well built, and picturesque.

Before Independence, Chittagong was no better. It appeared to be a huge mass of shanty hutments and shabby houses with narrow roads. The only modes of transport available were rickshaws pulled by people. A few Victorias (four-wheel coaches), driven by the most miserable, emaciated horses, could also be seen. Chittagong became the main port of East Pakistan after

the birth of Pakistan and, after passing through various stages of development, had become a relatively well-built city by 1971, much cleaner than Calcutta.

The second time I was in the vicinity of Calcutta was on the day of the Great Calcutta Massacre of 1946. I was on my way to Japan to rejoin my battery which was part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces. Owing to communal disturbances, we were stopped at Howrah and accommodated at the Howrah Transit Camp, just below the bridge which connected Howrah with Calcutta. I saw the massacre which took place on that bridge. This horrific Muslim-Hindu conflict—where innocent people on both side were caught unawares by the rioters, and were waylaid, hacked to pieces, and thrown dead or alive into the Hoogli River—led to the ultimate partition of not just Bengal but India as well.

In 1962, it was as a Pakistani student of Administrative Staff College, Lahore, that I paid my third visit to Bengal, which had now become East Pakistan. I was awakened to a new and shocking reality. I did not hear any references to the Calcutta killings of Muslims; instead, what I saw and heard people say was directed against their own compatriots of West Pakistan.

While at the Staff College as Directing Staff (DS) in Quetta (1958–62), I was asked by the commandant, Brigadier S. A. A. Bilgrami, to write a paper for higher education and training of senior officers. The paper was approved by both Brig. Bilgrami and the GHQ. As per the paper's recommendations, the War Course was introduced at the Staff College in Quetta. Major General Yaqub Ali Khan was posted as commandant and a team of senior

army officers was assembled for him as members of the directing staff. After completing an extended tenure as an instructor at Staff College (Staff Wing) in Quetta, I was posted to Lahore in 1962, to command an artillery regiment—commanding a regiment is a prerequisite in the army for further promotion.

In Lahore, while commanding an artillery unit and after having barely completed six months, I was nominated to attend a Senior Civil Services Course at the Administrative Staff College. I was the first army officer who had been selected to attend the said course. The college had stringent enrollment criteria, requiring the enrolled officer to be in the top four grades of their respective service. However, as I was only a lieutenant colonel, the college administration rightly concluded that I was sixth in terms of grade seniority (order of seniority: General, Lieutenant General, Major General, Brigadier, Colonel, and then Lieutenant Colonel). As I did not fit the enrolment criterion, the college authorities objected to my nomination for the course. The GHQ, without giving me any indication, accepted the college's right to ask me to leave if they felt I did not meet their standards. Luckily, I proved my merit, and my contribution was recognized without reservation by the college. Principal Malik and Vice Principal Qayyum, to my discomfiture, apologized for having objected to my nomination. I was graded as the best student in the course and my paper titled 'Power, Authority, and Responsibility', in which I had recommended 'lifting all governmental controls that were stifling the economic and industrial development of our country' was published.

When I visited East Pakistan in 1962 as a student of the Administrative Staff College, President Ayub Khan was highly respected for his leadership, both within the country and abroad. He had done a lot for the province. Development activities had been boosted through increased investment—the main hurdle to investment was stated to be the lack of absorptive capacity of the area. In West Pakistan, East Pakistan Governor Monem Khan was projected as an effective administrator. He was thought to have brought peace and tranquillity to the province, which was supposedly aiding its economic growth. Upon arrival in Dacca, however, I was shocked to see 'Down with Ayub' slogans chalked on walls all over the city. We were told by the educated elite, whom we met informally, that there existed a serious feeling of deprivation amongst the people of East Pakistan. They said that they were against Ayub's regime and against Monem Khan, the latter having become the most hated person in East Pakistan.

The War Course (at Staff College Quetta) was to start in three months but the tactical exercises for the course were not ready, mainly because whatever was produced was not considered up to the desired standards demanded by the commandant, General Yaqub. In a desperate attempt to get the program back on track, I was called to Quetta and tasked to write the required military exercises and have them approved by the commandant within three months. I had not met Gen. Yaqub before but found him to be a reasonable person to work with. It took me a month to write the exercises, after which he approved them. He was very impressed with my output and nominated me to the GHQ to become a member of the War Course directing staff.

In 1963, I visited East Pakistan for the second time as a member of the directing staff. We met Governor Monem Khan in Dacca. The meeting was quite memorable: instead of talking about the pace of economic development in his province, he related to us—using rather funny gestures—how he was given the position of 'Governor'. He said, 'One day, my President (Monem Khan always called Ayub "my President") came to the cabinet meeting. He sat down, he looked to his right, he looked to his left, and then he looked in front (joyously enacting the scene), and said, "I want a governor for East Pakistan". We looked to our right and we looked to our left and then we looked in front and all of us said, "We can't find a governor for East Pakistan". My President said, "You are all useless, go away and find one." The next day, the President came and sat down. He again looked to his right and to his left and asked, "Have you found a governor for East Pakistan?" We shook our heads. My President then looked at me and said, "Monem Khan, you are the Governor of East Pakistan".'

Monem Khan then proceeded to narrate a long story of his achievements. He had controlled, he said, the law and order situation, with the result that East Pakistan's capacity to absorb development funds had increased greatly. When we talked to others, however, we learned that this was untrue; Monem's concept of utilizing allotted funds meant merely spending them—he did not care about the outcome. He was quite happy if he could tell the Centre that funds had been exhausted and that he wanted more. This is how he felt his efficiency and administrative ability would be measured.

During this stay, what we observed in our social and

public meetings was disheartening. People in West Pakistan were not aware of the changing mindsets in East Pakistan. At every important location, the walls were plastered with anti-Ayub slogans. A very popular man, Lieutenant General Azam Khan, was no longer the governor. Therefore, an inefficient and partisan individual was inducted in his place—an Ayub Khan subservient. Some of the East Pakistanis whom we met would say, 'You call back whosoever becomes popular in East Pakistan—even if he is a West Pakistani. We do not want a Bengali like Monem Khan. We want people like Azam Khan, Umrao Khan, and N. M. Khan.'

The common man was still friendly but the higher echelons of society displayed a good deal of hostility. We noticed that while the regime's development efforts had resulted in significant economic growth, there was not enough focus on the social sectors of the economy. This way, economic progress itself caused problems. A new elite society was born, which wanted greater share in political power, even though the regime had become a presidential form of government and could not provide this. Subsequently, instead of being bridged, the gap was widened by the policies aimed at building a strong state without realizing that something else was required to build a strong nation. A state has a physical form; a nation an emotional cohesion.

Four years later, I was in a position to gain a closer view of that Wing when I was posted to Dacca in 1967 as commander artillery, 14 division. Fate had brought me to Dacca. I had been earmarked in 1966 to go to Delhi as military attaché in the Pakistan Embassy—a post tenable

by a full colonel. I was a lieutenant colonel then; my assignment to Delhi was considered a promotion. I spent two months preparing for the transfer, disposing off my car and household furniture. Just as I was about to depart for Delhi and was getting a final briefing at the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI), Chief of General Staff (CGS) General Yaqub called, saying that I was not going to India but was to report to him immediately. When I reached his office, the CGS said, 'Farman, you are not going to India.'

'Why, Sir?' I asked.

His reply was, 'The Delhi post is only for a full colonel and you are going to be a brigadier in the next few months.'

As CGS, he was challenged with planning Pakistan's defence, and for that, he wanted me to be in Rawalpindi as Deputy Director for Military Operations (DDMO) at the GHQ. Shortly afterwards, however, the Delhi post was held by a brigadier, and I toiled away happily in the GHQ to finalize the 'Operational Plan for Defence of Pakistan'.

Colonel M. A. G. Osmani, an East Pakistani, had held the DDMO post for the last eight years. Though he later became a general in the Mukti Bahini, he was not considered fit for promotion in the Pakistan Army. He was a Bengali and perhaps not trusted by the higher-ups. When I reported to him for taking over charge, I was horrified to discover that he was not getting even a single file to review. Even *chaprassies* (peons) did not pay any heed to him. His office had not been dusted; it was inactive, incapacitated, ineffective, and utterly ignored.

When I reported to the CGS for a directive, he asked me to study the existing plan and write a new one; he thought the current plan insufficient. Brigadier Omar, a man with

a great mind and many ideas, was Director Military Operations (DMO) but loathed desk work. Tasks that are essential for the preparation of a sound military plan—studying maps, measuring distances, and comparing ours and the enemy's resources—appeared to repulse to him.

The defence plan at the time was nothing more than a collation of division-level plans submitted by the lower headquarters. What in military terms is called 'Operational Strategy, with Hypothesis and Concept of Operations', had not been thought through. It did not state the conditions under which a war could start, nor had responses to various possible conflict situations been worked out. I had to, with the assistance of two other officers (Rana and Sarfraz), work day and night to alter the operational plan only for 'Defensive Operations under the Hypothesis of Enemy's Main Attack against West Pakistan while India remains on the Defensive against East Pakistan'. The plan was approved by the then commander-in-chief, Gen. Yahya Khan. He then presented it to President Ayub Khan. He too approved it, and all present appreciated it.

After the plan was finalized, I thought of analysing another possibility and sought permission to write an operational plan based on the hypothesis of an enemy attack on East Pakistan while remaining on the defensive against West Pakistan. This is exactly what happened in 1971, six years after the development of the situation as conceived in the projected hypothesis—but orders for my promotion and posting to Dacca had already been issued. The CGS said, 'I am sure somebody else will do this. You have a job to do in Dacca. 14 Division is conducting a war game to finalize the recommendations on the defence

of East Pakistan under the hypothesis you are talking about i.e. a major attack. You are to assist the General Officer Commanding (GOC) 14 Division in the conduct of the war game. At the end of the game you may make recommendations which will be given due consideration.' I acted as the Director of Exercise, Ex-SUNDARBAN I, conducted it, and presented my conclusions to CGS Yaqub and GOC Major General Muzaffaruddin. I made three significant suggestions which perhaps were clearly enunciated for the first time. These were:

1) East Pakistan resembles Poland during World War II. It is surrounded by the enemy. Its major cities, like those of Poland, are on the border thereby attracting outward forces, creating a vacuum in the middle, and consequently exposing Dacca to the enemy.
2) The defence of every inch of territory is not possible. The mission of the Pakistan Army should be changed from defence of East Pakistan to 'remaining in being'. (This terminology was used for the first time and was later included in the Operational Directive issued by the GHQ.)
3) The final attack on Dacca will come from the north in the same manner as delivered by Guderian in Poland (how ironic and true as the Indian attack also came from the north). Therefore, adequate defensive measures must be taken to defend Dacca at all costs.

Both the general officers fully endorsed these views and Gen. Muzaffaruddin issued orders to locate one battalion to cover the northern approach which till then had been neglected.

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I took over as Commander Artillery 14 Division Dacca on 2 February 1967. The subsequent fateful years kept me in East Pakistan and India till 21 April 1974. Though I was charged with the task of conducting Operational Exercise SUNDARBAN I, the CGS had simultaneously instructed me to write two papers: one on the 1965 war, and the second on 'Second Line Forces for Pakistan'. To write these papers, I returned to the GHQ on temporary duty and stayed there for a few months. In fact, during the first year of my tenure in East Pakistan, I spent over six months in Rawalpindi on the GHQ assignments described above.

The paper on second line forces was presented to Field Marshal Ayub in Abbottabad during the 1968 Formation Commanders' Conference. A general officer asked me, 'Would not the possession of arms by the civilians pose a great threat to the government?' I answered, 'If a nation turns against its rulers, it does not need arms to overthrow them.' Since I was a mere colonel, the officer did not like my blunt, bold statement in front of the president and other senior officers. However, after the discussion, I was told to resubmit the paper when comments from those present had been received. Since the conference was an annual feature, it was held again in 1969 in Abbottabad.

Meanwhile, Yahya Khan had taken over from Ayub as the country's 'Chief Executive' after a period of civil commotion. I too had been promoted to brigadier and was invited to present my paper. As we were walking towards the hall, Maj. Gen. Nawazish, Director General Military Training (DGMT), said, 'Farman, we are going to criticize your proposals.'

'Simply because I have written one?' I asked.

'So, the only way to avoid criticism is to not write anything and make no proposal!'

By then we had entered the hall which was full of Red-Tabs (senior army officers). When my turn came, I opened with this reference to President Ayub's forced resignation: 'Gentlemen, in response to a question last year, I had said that if a nation turns against its ruler, it does not need arms to overthrow him. How this statement of mine has been proven correct by subsequent events!'

I reiterated my earlier conclusion that the army alone could not defend Pakistan; we would never find resources to finance it to the extent required. My view was that the civil population should be trained on a territorial basis and integrated into the defensive efforts of the nation. My proposal was accepted, approved, and launched. Unfortunately it underwent certain modifications and when it was implemented, its motivational drive had steered away from patriotism to financial gains.

I had barely completed my engagement with Operational Exercise SUNDARBAN I when I was called back to the GHQ to act as Director Military Operations (DMO) in place of Brig. Ghulam Omar who was going on leave to perform Hajj. My appointment as DMO got me the CGS's approval for the concept of 'remaining in being' in East Pakistan, and I had it included in the Operational Directive (it was still there and Justice Hamoodur Rahman—who as head of the Commission was asked by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to look into the causes of the army's debacle in East Pakistan in 1971—showed it to me). My report on the 1965 war never saw the light of day as it was critical of the 'Conduct of War' and had concluded that we failed

to achieve our aim—activation of the Kashmir issue—and thus had not won the war.

Coming back to East Pakistan, I remained there from February 1967 onwards until it was reborn as Bangladesh. I bore witness to the problems it faced and watched the events unravelled from close quarters: the Agartala Case came to light, followed by Mujibur Rahman's trial and province-wide agitations, along with the imposition of Yahya's martial law.

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The year 1967 exhibited clear trends of the country's movement towards disintegration. The demand for Bangladesh was openly discussed. Hatred against West Pakistan was reflected in the eyes of the Bengalis; those who socialized, or had any contact with West Pakistanis were shunned by the others. The campaign against Urdu (which was considered a symbol of West Pakistani domination) was so intense and widespread that one could not find a single billboard with Urdu text anywhere. All shops had Bangla billboards. If one landed in the middle of a Dacca bazaar and asked a question in Urdu, it would either be ignored or answered in English. One felt totally estranged, as if in a foreign surrounding. The hate-Urdu campaign had invaded the realm of religion as well: I heard many students saying that they would not read the Quran as it was in the 'Urdu script'.

The students were in the vanguard of the campaign against what they termed West Pakistan's domination and exploitation of East Bengal. It was impossible for a West Pakistani to estimate the scale, dimension, and

organization of agitation that was raging in East Pakistan. Millions of people would come out on the streets and at meeting places in a matter of minutes in response to the call of leaders like Mujibur Rahman. The Students Action Committee (SAC) had branches down to the primary school level in villages. It will not be an exaggeration to say that at the call of the SAC, even birds were not allowed to fly. No vehicle could move on the roads except with their permission. People had to travel on foot on the day of a strike. Meetings and processions were organized on a massive scale. Every effort was made by the organizers to coin venomous slogans against West Pakistan. Pro-Bangladesh slogans were chanted with vigour and passion. '*Amar Desh, Tumar Desh, Bangladesh* (our motherland, your motherland, Bangladesh)', was shouted by hundreds and thousands of people in unison.

Artists had drawn pictures depicting extreme animosity and antagonism against West Pakistan. A few examples here would suffice to illustrate the hate. A big man in a *pugree* with a hidden knife was shown embracing a small man in a *dhoti*; the big man stabbed the small man while in embrace. This depicted betrayal of the Bengalis by the Punjabis. In another poster, maps of East Pakistan and West Pakistan were drawn. A snake was shown rising from West Pakistan, and going all the way across to bite East Pakistan. West Pakistan was blamed for every ill that befell East Pakistan. Even natural calamities like floods, cyclones, and tidal waves, which for centuries had afflicted that region, were attributed to the 'evil designs' of West Pakistan.

I soon found that Dacca University was an independent

island. The Pakistani flag could not—and did not—fly within its premises. Students held meetings almost daily, vociferously protesting and criticizing every action of the government. In all such meetings, the creation of Bangladesh was demanded and West Pakistan condemned.

The extent of this estrangement could be gauged from my personal experience. I knew a Major Zaman in Nowshera. When we reached Dacca, he had already left the army. Subsequently, whenever we saw each other in the bazaar or other places, he would always avoid us. I found that even in messes, the Bengali officers would not socialize with officers from West Pakistan. General Muzaffaruddin made special efforts to coax and goad both groups to mingle, but failed. One major reason for this failure was the regretful inability of the West Pakistanis to speak the Bengali language.

We all knew that 95 per cent of Bengali Muslims had voted for Pakistan. They had expressed feelings of Islamic brotherhood and wanted a separate homeland for Muslims in no uncertain terms. In fact, while in the first Constituent Assembly, Bengali Muslims had allowed Muslim members from outside their province to represent them, in 1967 I discovered that even talk of Islamic brotherhood and unity of Pakistan on the basis of Islam carried no conviction with them. The entire mass of Bengal was electrified with rage against West Pakistan for supposedly having snatched everything away from them.

# 2

# Estrangement

HOW HAD THIS ESTRANGEMENT AND HOSTILITY DEVELOPED between the two wings of Pakistan? It started early, just before Partition. Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, the great leader of the Muslims of Bengal, advocated the idea of an undivided, independent Greater Bengal. 'Make Bengal a great country and make Bengali Muslims, Hindus, and the scheduled castes a great nation,' he declared. He met Mahatma Gandhi, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and other national leaders. None of them liked his ideas except for a majority of Bengali Muslim leaders. The Hindus led by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee opposed the proposal. This idea died its natural death when Pakistan came into being, but not before it had sowed the seeds of Bengali nationalism and the possibility of a separate Bengali nation.

Discussions also revealed that the people of the two wings had different perceptions of Pakistan—the Bengalis lay greater emphasis on the Lahore Resolution (1940), which in their opinion envisaged two independent Muslim states. They claimed that they should be given greater recognition in the political power structure. It should be noted that Suhrawardy had amended the Lahore Resolution in 1946 and it was concluded that Pakistan would remain one state.

The glaring and damaging divergence in national policies was expressed on two major issues: language and foreign policy. The Bengalis did not accept the Quaid's declaration of making Urdu the national language even though he simultaneously stated that the Bengali language would continue to play its role within the province. They also wanted to develop friendly relations with India as they considered India their natural trading partners.

The question of representation centred on the basis of population delayed constitution-making till 1956. East Bengal had more votes because of a larger population but less representation in the National Assembly because a number of Muslims from Indian provinces had been inducted through the Bengali quota—West Pakistan had created this disparity because it feared Bengali domination.

The lower representation of Bengalis in the civil and armed forces was also rooted in history. There was only one Bengali officer in the whole of the Indian Civil Service (ICS), and only seventeen in the Indian police. The requirement for administering Pakistan was mostly met by officers migrating from Indian provinces—all who did not speak Bengali were wrongly labelled 'West Pakistani'. The lack of proper representation in the armed services was mainly because the British considered them a 'non-martial race'. Even in 1955, when a number of Bengalis were inducted into the army, there was only one brigadier and just a couple of colonels among them.

East Bengal was also less developed and had poor infrastructure. This was attributed to West Pakistan's exploitation of their resources when in the fact, the area had a very large population and too few resources.

That being said, none of these hurdles were insurmountable—they could have been overcome had the Government of Pakistan made a serious and sincere effort. It could have implemented the recommendations of the East Bengal Muslim League, which accepted the notion of a federal form of government to provide greater autonomy to East Pakistan. They wanted transportation, trade, and a separate list of areas to be controlled fully by the province. These were legitimate demands—their denial led to the Six Points.

The imposition of martial law further reduced East Pakistan's status to that of a colony since Bengali representation in the Services (armed forces) was next to nothing. Even today, the people of Pakistan lament the loss of East Pakistan without realizing that the fault also lay in the bureaucrats' behaviour, whose treatment of the Bengalis was similar to that of the British Raj.

Thus, even as early as 1967, the atmosphere in Dacca had become suffocating and there was a strong sense of enmity between the West and East Pakistanis. I remember feeling that Pakistan was at a crossroads. The very viability of Pakistan as a nation was at stake and was being questioned. The 1965 war with India made the Bengalis aware of their isolation and their vulnerability to Indian aggression. Bhutto's statement that China had saved East Pakistan did not help either; it fed the opinion that connection with West Pakistan was not necessary for East Pakistan's survival.

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The Agartala Case did more harm to the integrity of

Pakistan than anything else. The case was framed in the light of a conspiracy 'unearthed'. The main charge in this case against the accused was that they had planned to remove East Pakistan from Rawalpindi's control through violent means; with arms, ammunition, and other material help provided by India. The Intelligence agencies, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Intelligence Bureau (IB), had alleged that a certain number of Bengali personnel from all three Services of the armed forces had coordinated with the Indians and, with the active support of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and a few other politicians, had hatched a conspiracy to undo Pakistan. Several meetings with the Indians had taken place in the bordering Indian town of Agartala. The case was not handled well, and several mistakes were made.

Back then, I was commander artillery. During a discussion with GOC Muzaffaruddin, I had suggested that Mujib's name not be included in the case. Maj. Gen. Akbar, DG ISI, felt otherwise. 'The people will skin him,' he said. However, including Mujibur Rahman turned the conspiracy and, by extension, the case into a political one. He became a national Bengali hero virtually overnight—fighting the state of Pakistan for the rights of his East Pakistan brethren. A special tribunal was to conduct the trial. The case was prolonged for various reasons. The hearing was open; the press fully covered the proceedings almost verbatim. All witnesses used the court as a political platform. They alleged discrimination against the Bengalis in matters of representation, selection, and promotion. Facts and half-truths mingled with falsehood were employed to rouse the sentiments of the entire Bengali

population. This was the tipping point in public discourse: the Agartala Case turned the pro-Pakistani Bengalis into Bengali nationalists.

The case dragged on for quite a while. It was still being tried when agitation against Ayub began in West Pakistan. East Pakistan was peaceful in the early stages, although the students were very active. Later, when the PPP-led agitation weakened the central authority in West Pakistan, East Pakistan also rebelled. The atmosphere in East Pakistan became more violent once Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani's slogans of *'Agan Lagao'* (set everything on fire) were put into practice. The Agartala Case gave the hard-core extremists an excuse to take over control of the events. The unfortunate death of Sergeant Zahurul Haq added fuel to the fire. Muslim history was being repeated; whenever the Centre became weak, the provincial rulers unfurled their own flags of independence. As Ayub's position in West Pakistan became fragile, East Pakistani politicians took full advantage of the situation and launched their own movement. The nationwide unrest resulted in Ayub's Round Table Conference (RTC) getting postponed. The politicians in West Pakistan declined to attend the RTC till Mujib was released and invited to participate in the meeting. This resulted in Mujib becoming the 'leader of leaders', ascribing to him an undue amount of importance and further elevating his political stature in East Pakistan even more.

The Agartala case proved true when in 1971, India actively participated in the dismemberment of its neighbour against all canons of professional conduct, etiquette, international law, and behaviour. In this vein, I

refer to an open letter written by Kohinoor Hossain, the late Lieutenant Commander Moazzem Hossain's wife, one of the accused in the Agartala Conspiracy case. This letter took the form of an 'in memoriam to her husband' published in an issue of the daily *Purbadesh* of Dacca, dated 26 March 1972. I distinctly remember some of the lines, which I quote verbatim here, after translation from Bangla:

> Dearest husband,
> [...] You are no longer with me. I remember your contribution towards the cause of 'Independent Bangladesh'. I remember how you came to Dacca from Karachi on leave under a pseudonym, met P. N. Ojha, first secretary of the Indian embassy, at the border at Agartala along with other Indian and Bangladeshi officers. You negotiated with Indian authorities for arms and other kinds of help. [...]

Readers in the Indian subcontinent may recall that P. N. Ojha was none other than the man who the Government of Pakistan had expelled on charges of 'espionage and subversive activities'. There is no doubt that the Indians had all along been working towards the separation of East Pakistan, and they took full advantage of the situation that resulted from East Pakistan's demand for independence.

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Ayub Khan, succumbing to pressures from West Pakistani political leaders, asked Gen. Muzaffaruddin to arrange for Mujib's acceptance of conditional release on parole and departure to Rawalpindi for talks.

In his meeting with Muzaffaruddin, Mujib was all pleasantness, behaving as a loyal, patriotic Pakistani who praised Ayub. He promised that he would go to Rawalpindi and assist Ayub in restoring peace in the country. He also showed willingness to accept parole. However, the secrecy of the arrangements was violated when Mujib's political rivals issued a statement revealing news of his release. Such arrangements were considered a weakness—a sentimental approach that has been a legacy of British days. On hearing Maulvi Farid Ahmed's statement, Mujib refused to be released on parole, asking instead for unconditional release.

While planning the RTC, strategies for imposing martial law were also being studied. Minister of Defence Admiral A. R. Khan brought a proposal to Dacca; Gen. Awan (then Brig. DMI) was with him. The proposal was for the imposition of martial law in East Pakistan only. We considered it a very dangerous move. In both wings—West Pakistan under the leadership of Bhutto and East Pakistan under Mujib—people had turned against Ayub. It was obvious that imposing martial law under Ayub's leadership to maintain law and order and sustain his government would achieve the exact opposite.

When the proposal appeared to be unacceptable, Mujib was ordered to be released. He raised his conditions, asking to be permitted to address a rally before his departure to attend the RTC. He was allowed to do so, and at his call, approximately six hundred thousand people crammed into the Dacca Race Course to hear him. The sight of the large chanting crowd made him more arrogant.

When Bhutto boycotted the RTC, Mujib's earlier demands became unacceptable to Ayub. The RTC failed, and all doors to a political settlement were closed. Simultaneously, the president and the commander-in-chief began changing their minds. While Ayub had been ill, Yahya had tasted power. He presided over cabinet meetings, passed decisions, and issued orders. In short, he was the de facto executive head. He, like most others, enjoyed it and wanted to assume permanent power. Ayub's poor health had weakened his sharpness and decisiveness. He had become soft and resigned to fate. Yahya had made up his mind to take advantage of this weakness. As a preliminary step, he sent a circular to all army formations in December 1968 declaring that the army was neutral in the power struggle. This was clearly a political move meant to undermine Ayub's authority.

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No martial law can succeed without some support from one political party or the other. Bhutto met Yahya surreptitiously. The story of this meeting is narrated in the book *Zulfi My Friend* by Piloo Moodi. Bhutto's aircraft was diverted to Rawalpindi where he met Yahya who was waiting for him. Upon being asked, Bhutto promised support to Yahya. From that day on, Bhutto and Yahya remained close. Though Bhutto criticized the regime in public, he would explain this away to Yahya by saying that in politics, one had to criticize the government to win over people's support. Yahya relied heavily on Bhutto's political sagacity and guidance in the fateful years to come. With Gen. Peerzada as COS

to the president and virtual prime minister, Bhutto had access to all the secrets of the government and managed to influence many of Yahya's decisions.

General Muzaffaruddin attended a meeting in Rawalpindi on 19 March 1969, called by Commander-in-Chief Yahya Khan. It was decided in the meeting that martial law be imposed throughout the country—the date fixed was 25 March. The army's concern over the deteriorating law and order situation was conveyed to President Ayub, and the need for urgency was stressed. The president took note of the armed forces' message. He appointed new governors for both East and West Pakistan, and while briefing them, urged them to take concrete and immediate measures to improve the situation. He however, did not know that the army chief had already decided to take over.

Mr M. N. Huda was to take oath as the new governor of East Pakistan on 24 March in Dacca. But Gen. Muzaffaruddin told me on the 22nd, after his return from Rawalpindi, about the GHQ's decision to impose martial law one day later. I was struck by the façade during the oath ceremony. Turning to Muzaffaruddin, I said, 'Sir, what is all this? We are going to impose martial law tomorrow, so why all this?' He said, 'You just keep going with the events.'

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Time had run out for Ayub. He might have been able to retain control had he brought about administrative changes in the cabinet and the two governors earlier; both Musa and Monem were unpopular. Gen. Muzaffaruddin told Ayub about Monem when he visited Dacca earlier in February 1969, but he took no action. Ayub was an

old-time soldier, loyal to his subordinates; a praiseworthy quality in an army general, but a handicap for a political leader. By the time he decided to bring in changes, it was too late—Yahya was waiting to assume power.

About a month after martial law was imposed (25 March), Major General Gul Hassan visited the martial law administrator (MLA) in Dacca on 10 April 1969. I was present in the Governor House when he related the story of Yahya's takeover and spoke of the role he had played in forcing Yahya to take direct control. When Ayub proposed the promulgation of martial law, Yahya agreed but put forward the stipulation that control should be in the army's hands. This met Ayub's approval who then asked him to get the necessary papers prepared for his signature. Ayub was an honourable man who did not want to cling to power and so he resigned in the interest of the country. In his farewell address, Ayub stated that dissolution of one unit in West Pakistan and the Six Points were not acceptable to him as these would have weakened the country. Yahya promised to resolve the political problems facing the country.

Immediately after the imposition of martial law, there was peace throughout the country and all agitation came to an abrupt end. Yahya, unlike Ayub, did not ban political parties. Instead, he announced that his aim was to create conditions conducive to the establishment of a constitutional government, and one which would allow a smooth transfer of power to the representatives of the people, elected freely and impartially on the basis of adult franchise.

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There was no governor in East Pakistan during this time. GOC Muzaffaruddin became MLA East Zone and was entrusted with the responsibility to perform the governor's duties as well. He was not, however, given the title officially. I had completed two years of normal tenure in February 1969, and though orders for my posting to Lahore had been issued, I was detained for a period of three months to assist the MLA, but, given the frequent changes of governor, my stay continued to be extended. I served with Muzaffaruddin, Gen. S. M. Ahsan, Yaqub Khan, Tikka Khan, and Dr Malik. My family was in West Pakistan; three of my children were studying in Lahore. I wanted to come back to West Pakistan as I had completed more than my tenure but was not spared by any of the governors. I suffered, as did my children, but we did not complain. I know of many senior and junior officers who were quite scared and made excuses to avoid going to East Pakistan. Later, some of these officers were the loudest when criticizing those who were defending East Pakistan in 1971, calling themselves victims of circumstances.

I was posted as brigadier, civil affairs. We analysed the political condition; a great many events had happened since the creation of Pakistan. A new generation of leaders had risen, whose ideas had undergone remarkable change. In East Pakistan in March 1969, the Six Points were the accepted formula to express the intensified national pride and desire for a substantial measure of independence from the centralized political structure. The first point called for the establishment of federation 'on the basis of the Lahore Resolution and a parliamentary form of

government, with supremacy of legislature to be directly elected on the basis of adult franchise'. The second point demanded that the federal government deal with only two subjects—defence and foreign affairs—and that all the other subjects 'rest in the federating states'. The third point suggested having two separate but freely convertible currencies for the two wings (later, they were willing to accept one currency, provided effective constitutional provisions were made to stop the flight of capital from East to West Pakistan). Point four denied the centre the right to taxation. The federal government was to be provided with requisite revenue resources for meeting its requirements. It also envisaged provisions for unit governments to establish trade and commercial relations with foreign countries. The fifth point was that there shall be two separate accounts for foreign exchange earnings of the two wings. The sixth point demanded the setting up of a militia or a paramilitary force for East Pakistan.

The Six Points would apparently sow the seeds of secession. While their acceptance would have led to the creation of two independent states, they were essentially political in nature. The government could have responded in a politically feasible way, but even though Mujib had hinted that the demands were negotiable, the government embarked on a collision course instead of conciliation. Our analysis concluded that the situation had deteriorated dangerously. Those who had fought for Pakistan, and who had initially demanded autonomy, were now undergoing a shift in loyalty.

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I had met Mujib the day he was released. When the decision to release him was taken, he had to be transported to his house secretly to avoid any law and order upsets. The situation in Dacca was very tense and explosive and transporting him with an armed escort could have triggered violence in the city. Since nobody came forth willingly to perform such a risky feat unarmed and unescorted, I volunteered. Driving a Jeepster, I took Mujib and two other detainees from the army officer's mess to his house. I was supposed to drop all of them in front of Mujib's house and hurry back to the cantonment but I stayed on to ensure that they all got to their homes safely. Perhaps it was this gesture that won me Mujib's friendly disposition. It lasted till he was arrested again in March 1971.

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Returning to our political analysis, we submitted a report to President Yahya which stated that a 'large majority of Bengali intellectuals and other educated persons are for secession'. We expressed the view that martial law was unlikely to solve reverse this, and recommended that elections be held as soon as possible. The report was not received well.

I happened to visit the Chief Martial Law Administrator headquarters (CMLA HQ) Rawalpindi in May 1969. A Bengali staff officer, Col. Qayyum, who was standing next to Brig. Iskandarul Karim (also a Bengali), asked about the 'madman' who was stating that there are secessionists in East Pakistan. I informed him that it was me, and inquired when he had last visited East Pakistan. He gave

a figure of six or seven years because he had married a West Pakistani girl. I requested that he visit Dacca at his earliest convenience and assess the situation himself. His elder brothers, Kabir Chaudhry and Munir Chaudhry, were leading intellectuals of East Pakistan, and strong advocates of Bangladesh. When he next visited Dacca, he did come to see me and accepted what I had told him. He was surprised at how much the people's opinions had changed. He himself, however, remained a supporter of Pakistan and did not migrate to Bangladesh. This is how misdirected nationalism, inequality, malicious propaganda, and lack of a democratic process negatively affect hearts and minds. Even families stand divided over such major political issues. However, my subsequent experience revealed an even more unpleasant development: sub-nationalism. It is a terrible disease; it destroys all resistance to the appeal of, and the call for, separatism.

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By this time, extremely damaging political, administrative, and economic developments had taken place in the country. Worst of all was that all institutions had been either neutralized, weakened, or destroyed. National cohesion had given way to regionalism. Yahya was a powerful individual who knew how to delegate power and did not require consultation to make decisions. He was successful in the army—not many questioned his ability as an army commander—but he was not a politician. He, therefore, relied heavily on others for political advice. It was due to one such piece of advice from politicians of West Pakistan that Yahya terminated One Unit. He consulted

another political advisor, G. W. Chaudhry, and following his advice, discarded parity and accepted the principle of one-man-one-vote. Both these decisions had far-reaching consequences. Yahya had abrogated the 1962 Constitution. He had the option of either reinstating the 1956 Constitution or setting up a new constituent assembly to draw one up. We in the East Pakistan Governor House were in favour of the 1956 Constitution; its immediate reintroduction would not have created new issues. With every new approach to constitutional problems, a new debate was inevitable, thus risking opening a Pandora's box.

It was after a difficult period, spanning ten years of independence, that an agreed-upon Constitution was finalized in 1956. Though there was some disagreement in East Pakistan over the extent of provincial autonomy it provided, we believed that if Yahya had promulgated its reinstatement immediately after the imposition of martial law, the leaders of East Pakistan would have accepted it. Furthermore, a fresh election could have been held early in 1969, denying time to secessionist forces to exploit the subsequent events as they did later. However, ignoring Governor Ahsan's counsel, Yahya accepted the drafting committee's recommendations, and disclosed his plan for transfer of power on 28 November 1969. Elections for the national and provincial assemblies were to be held on the basis of one-man-one-vote in October 1970, giving the political leaders an entire year to organize their parties and influence public opinion. This 'one year of electioneering' was of greatest importance to the newly-formed political party, the PPP, since it was given the time needed to organize and spread its message. Its leader, using his

connections with Yahya, was able to gain time in West Pakistan. Unfortunately, the long electioneering activity had a devastating effect on the ideology and concept of Pakistan. Although, as per the Legal Framework Order (LFO) proclaimed by Yahya in March 1970, the Six Points demand had not been accepted, but the Awami League and its leader Mujib took full advantage of the freedom of political activity that it granted. The Awami League's aim was to win a commanding majority in the National Assembly by getting maximum seats from East Pakistan. Such a strategy had become feasible with the introduction of one-man-one-vote in which the East had been allotted a majority of the seats in the Assembly. Their major campaign theme was a pledge to frame the Constitution of Pakistan on the basis of their own Six Points and the Eleven Points programme of the students. The Awami League played up the grievances—real and fake—of the Bengalis throughout the year, and fuelled emotions against Punjabi 'exploiters'. Mujib was neither an intellectual nor a very intelligent man, but he was a great orator. He was a demagogue who played with the sentiments of the people, and was thus able to garner solid support for himself and his party. The other political parties were Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), Pakistan Democratic Party (PDP), three factions of the Muslim League (Council, Qayyum, and Convention), and the National Awami Party (NAP) with two factions (pro-Moscow and pro-Peking). It became apparent early on in the election campaign that 'national' and Islam-*pasand* parties had little support of the masses, and their support tended to be regional and leftist. Leftist

parties did not fully believe in the constitutional process as they maintained that Bengali rights could only be achieved through confrontation and armed struggle. The Awami League had, by electing to take part in the political process, gained an advantage over the leftist parties. However, the leftist demand for independence was articulated by no less than Maulana Bhashani himself—one of the founding fighters for the struggle for Pakistan. On being asked about his change of heart, he stated that he needed to make more demands than Mujib so as to maintain the upper hand. This is an example of how some politicians use rhetoric to outbid one another in an attempt to win elections.

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We tried to gain clear guidance on the attitude to be adopted regarding the propagation of the Six Points. In our opinion the Six Points were a negation of the Legal Framework Order. The LFO had spelled out the parameters of the future Constitution of Pakistan and had envisioned a democratic and federal government for the country. Concerning provincial autonomy, the LFO stated that while provinces would have maximum legislative, administrative, and financial power, 'the federal government also shall have adequate powers including legislative, administrative, and financial, to discharge its responsibilities in relation to external affairs and to preserve the independence and territorial integrity of the country'. Despite this clear enunciation, the LFO was being countermanded by the Awami League. During one of my visits, I asked the then Brig. ML Affairs, Rahim,

as to whether we were to allow the propagation of the Six Points. He consulted his superiors in the CMLA HQ and stated that since propagation of *Sindhu Desh* had been allowed, the Six Points could move ahead as well. Martial law authorities in East Pakistan also took no action to stop the propagation of the Six Points and the movement for achieving Awami League's objective continued unabated.

# 3

# The 1970 Elections

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGNS BEGAN WITH A BANG AFTER midnight on 31 December 1970. The following evening, the Awami League led a torch-bearing procession chanting slogans of 'Bangladesh'. West Pakistan's imperialism was condemned and the general mood was defiant against the western wing. Subsequently, other parties organized meetings and processions throughout the province, but the Awami League was well ahead of the others since the beginning.

The leaders as well as followers—motivated and steeped in Bengali nationalism—had better organizational setup and most importantly, sound financial backing. The financial resources available to the members of the Awami League appeared unlimited, helping them to project themselves and their party to the masses. To elaborate on this with the help of an example, we can picture the Awami League election symbol of a boat. Hundreds of wooden boats were seen hanging above the ground at all important crossroads in cities and in the entire countryside. This alone would have cost the organization at least a crore rupees. Neither were the members rich nor were the masses in a position to give substantial amounts of money to the party. There were no big industrialists in East Pakistan with deep Awami League commitments.

Rumour had it that India had provided the Awami League all the funds required. In my opinion, which I expressed at that time, Indian investment was on a sound footing from their point of view. We were going to see a battle of ballots, not bullets. In the battle of ballots, money plays a decisive role. Even in the USA, a presidential candidate who runs short of money has no chance of success as seen during the periods of Nixon's first candidacy and Humphrey's presidency.

The pro-Pakistan parties approached the president for assistance, pleading that the 1970 elections would decide the fate of Pakistan. I fully endorsed this view and asked for financial support. I made two suggestions. The first concerned Muslim League funds that had been frozen by the martial law regime due to a dispute between the Convention, Council, and Qayyum Leagues. The Muslim Leaguers were lawful owners of the funds. They needed money not only for themselves but also to preserve the integrity of Pakistan. I met with Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan and Fazlul Qadir Chaudhry and got their endorsement. However, President Yahya did not accept this suggestion.

My second proposal was that we should treat the elections as a way to defend Pakistan since its very survival was at stake. The country was created as a result of the popular vote; it could disintegrate through the same process. Those charged with the responsibility of preserving Pakistan's territorial integrity should take all measures to ensure defence against all internal and external threats to it.

In a normal process of democratic elections, the

government must remain neutral. This, however, was not the case with the 1970 elections. Here, one of the major political parties was seeking a mandate from the people to break up the country. The prospect of this party coming to power had to be thwarted to save Pakistan. Therefore, I pleaded that money that had been earmarked for second line forces be utilized to support pro-Pakistan parties if no other source was available. This suggestion was not accepted either. Mujib had been able to convince Yahya that his Six Points propaganda was only a means to win the election, that he was not against Pakistan, and that he would change his attitude after the election. I think Yahya's friendly disposition towards Mujib before the elections was because of the latter's promise to accept the former as the future President of Pakistan. However, the regime did help Islam-*pasand* parties through some of the industrialists who gave money to the political parties. As far as I know, all political parties benefited but as the amounts were meagre and the parties too many, the effort had no impact.

Money plays an important role in elections. In India, the major reason for political stability and the continued rule of Congress was the well-coordinated collaboration between leading industrialists and the Congress Party. Meanwhile, in Pakistan, the leading moneyed class is that of the agriculturists and they tend to take part in elections themselves. In India, the industrialists feel safe by having representatives financed by them in the House.

The election campaign went on with Mujib and the other leaders journeying by road, rail, and boats from one end of the province to the other. The Awami League's emphasis

was on the demand for the acceptance of the Six Points in which they overstated Bengali nationalism. Alleged exploitation and injustice perpetrated by West Pakistan, disparity in services, flight of capital, and indignities inflicted, were some of the emotion-arousing rants of the speakers. It was an appealing propaganda theme, and preaching it paid dividends to the Awami League.

The sustained propaganda gradually started having an effect on government servants as well. This phenomenon is associated with sub-nationalism. Once it spreads, the loyalty, efficiency, and reliability of government servants and agencies become seriously affected. The government loses the support of its executives, which adversely affects its ability to govern and maintain law and order. More and more government servants, including senior secretaries to the government, started ascribing to the Awami League's ideology. Their loyalties tilted more towards Mujib than towards the government.

A very significant and disturbing development was that even the loyalty of the East Pakistan armed forces' personnel was wavering. Meetings of both serving and retired army officers were frequently held under the chairmanship of Col. M. A. G. Osmani, so as to organize an underground force for the Awami League in case constitutional methods failed. The Awami League had decided to participate in the coming elections as the amended one-man-one-vote clause provided a constitutional opening to come to power, and to undo 'inequities' and 'injustices' done to them in the past. However, there was a group under Tajuddin who maintained that West Pakistan would not hand over power peacefully, and it would have to be taken

by force. To that effect, they were setting up organization and training facilities during the election campaign. The Awami League used the strong-arm method to neutralize and decimate all opposition, except for the leftist parties. In underdeveloped countries, leftist parties support sub-nationalism in order to create confusion, chaos, and eventual disintegration.

In July 1970, Maulana Maudoodi visited East Pakistan. A grand rally was planned for Paltan Maidan which had the reputation of being the political arena of East Pakistan (it was said that whoever held Paltan Maidan, held East Pakistan). Jamaat-i-Islami was well known for its effective and active organization, and had its own dedicated and well-motivated students and workers. I had warned them to be on guard against the Awami League's mischief. They organized defence groups and were well-stocked with *lathis,* but the Awami League proved to be better planners and executors. They completely disrupted the meeting, and beat up the participants ruthlessly. The Jamaat was so thoroughly routed that after this incident, the Awami League had no opposition to its activities. I was called to West Pakistan that day. I always had a feeling that my absence had been planned. The martial law authorities under Brigadier Majeedul Haq did not provide the JI with any police support.

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Floods hit East Pakistan in July, which provided a politicking theme to the rabble rousers in the Awami League. They exploited and capitalized on the misery caused by the floods. Some went so far as to blame the

Government of Pakistan for the floods since it had failed to implement the Krugg Mission's recommendations for flood control. Nobody bothered to read the Krugg Mission report or its recommendations which were controversial to say the least, and would perhaps have been damaging to the entire countryside.

President Yahya travelled to East Pakistan a month later and visited the flood-affected areas. The people greeted him with great enthusiasm and slogans of 'Pakistan *zindabad*' and 'Ayub *zindabad*'. They did not know that Ayub was no longer president and it was Yahya visiting them. It also showed Ayub's popularity with the common man and their loyalty to Pakistan.

The people of East Pakistan were devoted Pakistanis until their leaders misled and betrayed them, and the leaders of West Pakistan threw them out.

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The president discussed the possibilities of postponing the elections because of the floods. All political parties except the Awami League were clamouring for postponement. Publicly, Mujib had taken a stand against the martial law regime but, when he was face to face with Yahya, he accepted his decision meekly. The elections were postponed. This dual-faced disposition is normal in a fairly large number of political leaders. Even Maulana Bhashani would behave most cooperatively when he met Yahya in private. I was present in one such meeting when he said, 'You keep occupying this chair. We are agitators and will continue to agitate. You sit where you are'.

There was a clearly identifiable separatist movement in East Pakistan spearheaded by the students and intellectuals of the province. A movement is a result of ideas conceived and propagated. Force of arms cannot counter such a movement, only opposing ideas can. The battle is won by the strength of the idea as well as by its presentation and propagation. Sitting in East Pakistan, one could see quite early on in the election process that there would be serious trouble if the Awami League won by an overwhelming majority; it would lend added strength to the extremist elements demanding independence. It was felt that if the pro-Pakistan parties could form a united platform and put up joint candidates, the margin of an Awami League majority would be reduced, thereby influencing them to adopt a more reasonable attitude towards the integrity of the country. Keeping this in view—and only to ensure reduction in Awami League majority—I supported the efforts of Nurul Amin and Khwaja Khairuddin to forge a unity and understanding amongst Islam-*pasand* parties in order to deflect the twin danger, one to ideology, and the other to the integrity of Pakistan, from the forces of secularism and socialism in the coming elections. We succeeded to a certain extent but after nominating eighty seats, the exercise ran into trouble.

Suffering from severe debilitating back pain due to an acute disc prolapse, I was taking ten to twenty pain tablets a day and was recommended urgent surgery. The president granted me leave for surgery. He did not pay much heed when I protested saying that my presence would be useful for the elections. So I went and had a successful back operation, but was away for three weeks;

the Islam-*pasand* parties had disintegrated during this period. We could not meaningfully display the pro-Pakistan sentiments of the East Pakistanis, which would have been beneficial. Interestingly, despite all this, I am blamed by the PPP for 'distributing sweets and biscuits' in Dacca. I only plead guilty to making an effort to save Pakistan by making pro-Pakistan parties join hands in the elections.

When I met Sheikh Mujib after the elections, he complained about my anti-Awami League stance. I told him I was only trying to help him because with a big majority, he would find himself a slave in the hands of the extremists. Though at the time he said it would not be so, subsequent events proved that I was correct. He claimed he had such power over his people that they would be obligated to do whatever he wanted, 'to sit down or to stand up', if he so asked them to. Ultimately, despite his promises to the president that the Six Points were negotiable, he was forced by his party to take an oath in a staged ceremony, dedicating himself and all his MNAs to the Six Points formula. If he had won with a lower margin, he would have had greater flexibility, and the option to be compromising.

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To add to the woes of East Pakistan, a cyclone of unprecedented ferocity hit its southern regions on the eve of 13 November 1970. The cyclone and tidal bore wreaked havoc on human lives, properties, and livestock in all the five coastal districts of East Pakistan. The worst hit were the Islands of Bhola (Barisal District), Hatia (Naokhali

District), Sandwip (Chittagong District), and almost the entire district of Patuakhali. The damage caused by this calamity was beyond comprehension. The exact number of people dead was not known for many days. Official figures, however, estimated the death toll at close to two hundred thousand, with around fourteen thousand missing.

This catastrophe put all electioneering on the backburner for a while, but some politicians, obsessed with the election outcome, did not miss the opportunity to exploit the tragedy for their political gain. They capitalized on it using Pakistan slogans, criticizing the alleged apathy of the central government, and advocating full autonomy. Some even went to the extent of demanding complete independence as a solution to the geographical isolation and the utter inability of West Pakistan to be useful even during peace. Their slandering did not even spare the army.

The stupendous task of mobilising and providing relief to the survivors of the cyclone and burying the dead was too much for the provincial government, so the armed forces willingly extended their logistic, physical, and moral support to help alleviate human suffering. Initially, the only thing visible was the lone army helicopter for nine to ten hours a day. This was supplemented by army engineers, LCT, and PAF C-130s.

The naval efforts and troops that moved out on the 13th and 14th were not visible to the general public and the press for a day or so, which turned into the subject of controversy. The army however, went about its job as usual. It began coordinating the receipt and dispatch of relief material to the affected areas, utilizing all available

resources. They supervised distribution to the afflicted, the burial of the dead, and disposal of animal carcasses. The task was gigantic and the resources meagre. By then, the whole world had been moved by the foreign press and relief from all over the globe started pouring in. Handling foreign aid and aircraft was again a difficult task but the armed forces ensured that it was well coordinated and organized.

Given that the armed forces' efforts were low-key, it was misinterpreted by the press, and misrepresented to the public. They termed it 'a pathetic attitude' of the administration towards the calamity. Strangely enough, they also claimed that this was the Centre's conspiracy to destroy East Pakistan. The press and the political leaders, both branded the absence of West Pakistani politicians as a display of anti-Bengali attitude. This misunderstanding caused several political controversies in which the foreign press got involved as well by dragging itself into local politics. It was said that the sense of geographical isolation that East Pakistan felt during the 1965 war gave rise to the Six Points demand, and the cyclonic calamity reinforced the theory. Delhi-based foreign press correspondents added fuel to the fire.

They focused their entire attention on the bitterness of East-West relations, bringing into prominence the hatred which the autonomy-seeking Bengali nationalist leaders had for the central government. It appeared as if they had assumed the responsibility of bringing home to every East Pakistani the disadvantages of dependence on the Centre and West Pakistan, and the advantage of becoming a fully-autonomous state. While the exponents of the Six

Points had avoided talk of secession on the eve of election, the foreign media made sure of its mention by asking direct as well as indirect questions about aid from West Pakistan. The anti-West Pakistan propaganda continued to escalate. Even the relief commissioner, a Pakistani civil services' officer, started accusing the central government of apathy, demanding more and more helicopters from West Pakistan.

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I was on my way back to Pakistan after my operation and was performing *Umrah* when I heard news of the unrest in East Pakistan. I had been allowed medical leave and was advised rest for six weeks but instead hurried back to Dacca. Once there, I found a crisis in relations between the civil and the military arms of the government. Admiral Ahsan was the governor and Gen. Yaqub the martial law administrator; both very fine individuals and good administrators. The rehabilitation commissioner, an extremist Bengali nationalist, would daily issue statements accusing West Pakistan and the central government of lethargy, insensitivity, and disregard for the misery of the people of East Pakistan. Saadullah, colonel staff of 14 Division, was an upright soldier and had a weakness from which all army officers suffer: he was blunt and forthright. Saadullah and the rehabilitation commissioner had clashed during the relief coordination meetings, giving birth to two hostile camps.

When I reached the office in the morning, I walked in to see a few secretaries of the government of East Pakistan waiting to see the governor. They pleaded that I take over

the operation of cyclone relief work; they would not work, they said, under any other military official. I went to see the governor who repeated what the civil officials had said. I told the governor about the doctor's orders (my back wound was still raw and the doctors had advised me to not sit in a chair for long hours, otherwise I might suffer from back pain throughout my life). He was sympathetic but insisted that I had to, stressing that otherwise the country's civil and military relations might not normalize. I had no option but to accept the responsibility, and began coordinating relief work.

It was the month of Ramazan; we used to start work after *tarawih* at 9:30 p.m. and would finish by midnight. It was arduous work, allocating sorties of aircraft, helicopters, boats, and vehicles, along with equipment, material, and food for each consignment. Arrangements had to be made to receive foreign aid and consignments from West Pakistan. I was soon able to create harmony and understanding between the warring groups. The relief operation was so successful that after the cyclone, not a single person died of hunger, disease, or any other related cause. In the process, I hurt my back very badly; the wound was raw and the side muscles weak. I will carry this pain and discomfort to the grave but with the comforting knowledge that this was for the service of the country. Bangladesh was decades later again hit by a cyclone but disease, hunger, and inadequately organized relief resulted in thousands of deaths and the burning of dead bodies.[1]

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One day, I came to know that British units on their way back from Singapore were to land in the area of Patuakhali to carry out flood-relief operations. As the central government had agreed to this politically-unwise move, we could not stop their arrival. I was, however, horrified to note that while foreign troops would be landing on our soil, not a single Pakistani soldier would be there to receive them. I hurried down to the cantonment and met the MLA. We discussed the civil-military relationship which, in the opinion of Gen. Yaqub, also required improvement. I was able to convince him that the British contingent be properly received. This was done eventually; they were received by the brigade commander of the area.

Since the accusations of a 'tardy response' from West Pakistan persisted, I asked the commissioner relief operation to organize sari collection points in Dacca as a means to expose the callousness of the Bengalis themselves. Obviously, saris were unlikely to come from West Pakistan or anywhere else. Several points were set up and appeals broadcast on radio and television. The response from the people of Dacca was pathetic. We did not get saris but the step made the anti-West Pakistan propagandists quiet down. This propaganda was so virulent and venomous, it would make one question how this could possibly be directed against one's own people and government. The truth of the matter, however, and the sole purpose of this rhetoric, was to further the cause of the separatists and Bengali nationalists. They exploited every possible opportunity to discredit the Government of Pakistan and to fan the hatred against West Pakistan. The army did whatever it could to help their brothers in East Pakistan.

When the politicians realized that the people were developing a soft corner for the army, they levelled false accusations against them. There were instances where dead bodies that the army *jawans* had buried were exhumed by close relatives to get photographs taken by the foreign press in return for a few rupees. Accusations would then follow that West Pakistanis were not burying the dead.

The catastrophe proved to be a blessing in disguise for the political parties and leaders who were either half-heartedly taking part in the elections, were lagging behind in their campaigns, or feared defeat. Such elements called for postponing the elections. They were either never sure of their victory, or probably did not want to exist in isolation in a House they were sure would be dominated by the Awami League. Whatever the motive may be, they abstained from contesting the elections.

With the increasing number of withdrawals, the elections became a one-sided affair. The Awami League, which was leading throughout, barely faced any competition now. They were expected to raise an issue on the eve of the elections to fan and exploit the feelings of Bengali nationalism, but were spared the effort. They simply had to move their lips and the rest was done by nature, the local press, and the foreign correspondents.

It appeared that destiny was leading us up the path of separation. First, Mujib's public trial had acted as a catalyst for Bengali nationalism (it existed since the inception of Pakistan and was spurred on by the trial). Then came Yahya with his 'one-man-one-vote' and disintegration of One Unit. This opened up the possibility of permanent majority rule by East Pakistan which infused fears of

domination, both political and economic, in West Pakistan. The floods, followed by a cyclone of unprecedented fury, helped further generate anti-Pakistan sentiment. Mujib and Bhutto simultaneously became leaders with identical ambitions of becoming heads of government. Mujib had greater vote power but was less clever than the brilliant, ambitious, and ruthless Bhutto.

The army had been ruling over Pakistan for a long time. All political leaders wanted to get rid of it, and probably rightly so. The army has no right to rule. They may come in to restore law and order but they should hand over power to the civilian authorities as soon as possible. According to Bhutto, there were three powers in Pakistan: the Awami League, the Peoples Party, and the army. Mujib being less clever was likely to oppose the army head-on. The brilliant Bhutto manoeuvred so as to create a situation where the army destroyed the Awami League, and in the process destroyed itself, leaving the field open to the PPP as the only powerful party in West Pakistan.

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Although political parties and their activities had been banned after the imposition of martial law in 1958, student unions were allowed to exist and function. Politicians found that student unions were convenient vehicles to influence and establish trends. In East Pakistan, student unions became the most powerful anti-government organizations with established branches down to the primary levels; their Students Action Committee was a force to be reckoned with. Their programme was to struggle for the implementation of the Six Points of the

Awami League and the Eleven Points of the students. They acted as the vanguard of political thought and demands of East Pakistan; invariably, they demanded more than the political parties did, expressing their ideas through virulent speeches in the safe sanctuary of Dacca University. The students had managed to make the university campus a no man's land, a safe haven for rebels. The police were not even allowed to enter the university's premises.

The people of West Pakistan could not comprehend the power, influence, and effectiveness of the students. When the students voiced any new thought or demand, political parties would tamely take it up. When they launched a movement and called for a strike, the whole province obeyed the instructions. The call was obeyed down to the village levels with students of the primary level ensuring obedience.

The student organizations defied the lawful and legal authority of the government whenever they saw fit. Their philosophy was nationalistic, socialistic, and anti-Islam. They opposed each and every step taken to integrate of the country on the basis of a Pakistani nationhood. A. S. M. Rab, a student leader of the East Pakistan Students' League (EPSL), explicitly articulated the views of the student community when he said on 17 August 1970, 'We want to declare that those who are below the age of twenty-four have dreams of a new map, formation of a new country and a new nation'. A rival student union, the East Pakistan Students' Union (EPSU), declared on 22 November that the remedy for all their ills lay in 'establishing an independent People's Democratic East Bengal'.

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As the election date approached, there was greater and more vivid crystallization of political ideas in East Pakistan. The Awami League had agreed to participate in the elections as therein lay a chance for it to gain control of the government through peaceful and constitutional means. At the same time, it encouraged students and radicals to keep the pressure on through calls for the establishment of Bangladesh, and, to achieve their aims through violent means if necessary. The trend was clearly visible when even Maulana Bhashani asked for an independent state of East Pakistan under a red banner with four stars.

My reading of the situation was that except for the Muslim League, all other worthwhile political parties had a vision of an independent region. Awami League wanted a Bangla *Desh*. NAP (Wali Khan Group) was for a pro-Moscow Bangladesh. Maulana Bhashani wanted a pro-Peking Bangladesh. I would even dare to say that the Jamaat-i-Islami was also for a Muslim Bengal. The odds were heavily stacked against a centralized system prevailing in Pakistan.

# 4

# After the Elections

ELECTIONS WERE OVER BY JANUARY 1971—THE AWAMI LEAGUE had won all but two East Pakistan seats, becoming the single largest party in the National Assembly. Annulling the principle of parity had thus created an unusually complex situation and in an attempt to unravel this complication, political evaluation commenced. The intelligentsia were the protagonists of Bengali nationalism, determined to use the election victory to realize their dream of Bangladesh. The younger generation wanted outright separation. A solution for compromise was also floated. Its advocates claimed that accepting it would take the wind out of the sails of those who were pleading for a completely independent Bangladesh—the concept of a virtual confederation with a common head of state in rotation. It was being suggested that such an arrangement might, through a historical process of evolution, lead to a conducive federation or a peaceful parting of the ways. Pressure was building up in West Pakistan too, which undermined the established concept of one country. Bhutto declared that 'without consensus, any future constitution would indeed be a barren exercise'. He hoped the Awami League would not 'bulldoze the issue through the process of brute majority', and propounded the unprecedented and impractical theory of two majority parties.

There was an urgent need for reconciliation. The leaders were expected to overcome and eliminate frustration, suspicion, and hatred. The time had come for honest discussions and to find a solution that was mutually acceptable. The need of the hour was to resolve the difficulties with understanding, restraint, and utmost care. Unfortunately, what had actually begun was a head-on collision between parties which would lead to a major disaster: the dismemberment of the country.

Historically, the Six Points were the outcome of the East Pakistani's past experiences who had begun to believe they could never hope to have their due share of power under a centralized system of government. However, with the dissolution of One Unit and the abolition of the principle of parity, the situation changed completely; the set of circumstances responsible for creating suspicion were no longer there. Obviously, the Bengalis were now looking forward to ruling over the whole of Pakistan. The West Pakistanis now spoke of protection from the brute majority of East Pakistan; a fantastic reversal of roles, apprehensions, and claims. The Legal Framework Order that had been issued by President Yahya Khan restricted constitution-making to 120 days. The Awami League thought that the period was enough—the Peoples Party leadership felt otherwise. Seeking a longer period to reassess their point of view to arrive at a compromise, they demanded pre-session discussions.

While countrywide parleys between the Peoples Party and the Awami League were going on, I thought it worthwhile to start a dialogue with the Awami League which at a minimum would facilitate the maintenance of law and order at the provincial level.

I suggested this to Governor Admiral Ahsan and added that it would be helpful to invite Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for discussions. The governor, however, did not believe there could be any meaningful discussion with Mujib since the president had not indicated such a thing. I knew the reason for his reservation—West Pakistani Leaders (The Peoples Party) had floated rumours accusing Ahsan of being close to the Awami League. Having failed to convince the governor, I approached MLA Gen. Yaqub. He too declined and refused to get involved. I then asked for permission to meet Mujib myself. I considered it important for the future of Pakistan that Mujib's views were known and some influence projected on him to counter the pressure of extremist ideas. The permission was granted.

I met Mujib at the residence of a common friend, Mr Mujtaba of Mughal Tobacco Company. Mujib started the conversation by complaining that I had opposed him and helped Islam-*pasand* parties during the election. I told him that I accepted his charges. I had opposed him no doubt, I said, but with no bad intention; my efforts were indirectly meant to help him in the long run. I explained that with the thumping majority that he had, he was a virtual slave to the Six Points and hence, in my opinion, a weaker man. He did not agree with this view and said, 'I am the Bangabandhu. If I tell them to stand up they will stand up and if I tell them to sit down they will sit down.' Even though he did not accept my appraisal of his position, we had a friendly discussion about the future constitution of Pakistan. He agreed that of his Six Points, the three that generated opposition from West Pakistan related to having

two currencies, control over foreign exchange earnings by each wing, and separate negotiations for aid/loans from other countries.

Mujib volunteered to drop the concept of two currencies. On separate negotiations for aid, he was willing to have a Pakistan-level team with majority members from the wing where a particular project was to be executed. It was not an objectionable suggestion, rather a positive and healthier one. Regarding control over foreign exchange earnings, East Pakistan had come to realize that the situation had changed. Since West Pakistan's earnings amounted to 54 per cent,[2] it would be in East Pakistan's interest to drop it. It was quite clear that it was possible to resolve the political differences between West and East Pakistan. Unfortunately, neither the powers that be, nor the West Pakistani leadership, had such intentions. On the contrary, every effort was made to accentuate the differences and confront each other.

I submitted a report on the meeting to Gen. Ayub, which was then forwarded to the president. Unfortunately, the anti-East Pakistan advisors around him did not let him seize the opportunity. Later, in March 1971, an effort was made but it was unproductive for reasons which we will discuss later. Timing is very important in resolving problems. A solution may be correct and acceptable today, but the same may become obsolete after some time. The severing of the air link provided an opportunity to the extremists to demand complete independence. This served Bhutto's aim as well.

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The extremists kept the pressure on. Every move or utterance the West Pakistani leaders made was viewed with suspicion and treated as a conspiracy against East Pakistan. Voicing their views, even Mujib publicly stated that 'the victory of the Six Points will be achieved even if the people of Bangladesh have to face bullets'. Some other Awami League leaders said that if the constitution based on the Six Points was not authenticated by the president, they would make a unilateral declaration of independence.[3]

However, the official stance of the Awami League continued to be constitutional. They wanted to take advantage of their decisive victory in the general elections. They, therefore, instantly started putting final touches on the draft constitution; Sheikh Mujib was confident the bill (recommending a constitution for Pakistan) would be passed even if it was based on his party's programme of the Six Points. The LFO had not imposed the normal requirement of two-thirds majority, and as the Awami League had the absolute majority, they saw no reason for its rejection by the House. He also expressed the hope that the president would authenticate the constitution without delay and that power would be transferred to the elected representatives of the nation within a reasonable span of time.

President Yahya visited Dacca during the second week of January. He held extensive discussions with Mujib and his team, and point by point asked for their explanation of the Six Points programme. It transpired that various members of Mujib's team had different interpretations ranging from a secessionists' approach to a well-knit federal system. The president was disappointed with Mujib's

newfound attitude. Where before the elections Mujib was submissive, very cooperative, and had unreservedly promised flexibility in East Pakistan's demands, he now showed aggressiveness and rigidity using the excuse of the 'people's demand' as well as the known reality of their being in majority. Yahya considered this a betrayal of trust. He found that the East Pakistan leaders were becoming inflexible; they were talking of ruling West Pakistan for the next twenty years as West Pakistan had done.

He did not express his emotions publicly, nor did he voice the conclusions drawn. When questioned by foreign journalists at Dacca Airport, the president declared that Mujib shall be the next prime minister of Pakistan. This announcement was well received in Dacca. In the backdrop of rumours of him being overthrown by General Hamid, when asked by a BBC correspondent whether he was still in power, the president said, 'Very much so.'

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Yahya flew to Karachi and went straight to Larkana on 17 January to meet Bhutto. This was yet another sore point with East Pakistanis: in Dacca, he had not taken the trouble of visiting Sheikh Mujib at his house. 'The president has now gone to his enemy's house in Larkana to hatch a conspiracy against the people of Bangladesh,' Mujib's supporters said. Sore with Mujib's betrayal, the president was receptive to Bhutto's evaluation of the situation. They suspected Mujib's intentions and his loyalty to Pakistan.

I was not present in Larkana so I do not know what transpired there but Gen. Omar later told me that Bhutto's theory was accepted. His theory being that the president

should test Mujib's loyalty by postponing the National Assembly session. If Mujib accepted the postponement, he would prove himself to be a loyal Pakistani. Bhutto's critics speculate what the outcome would have been if the reverse had been applied to him—that is, if the National Assembly had met on 3 March as announced. The president asked Bhutto to visit East Pakistan and meet Mujib to resolve their differences.

Bhutto arrived in Dacca on 27 January with a high-powered delegation, and held extensive discussions with Mujib and other Awami League leaders for three days. The talks were inconclusive but Bhutto promised to continue the dialogue. The main difference centred on the question of sharing power. Bhutto was of the view that one wing dominating the other would not be feasible, given the geographical separation and remnants of the past. To frame a constitution in which power is denied to one wing would thus, in his view, be a fruitless exercise. Mujib and his party felt that framing the constitution and forming a government were two separate exercises. They refused to accept that they had to agree to share power before they framed the constitution.

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The hijacking of an Indian aircraft by members of the Kashmir Liberation Front was viewed with considerable misgivings in Dacca. Unfortunately, it happened while Bhutto was still there. On his return, he met the hijackers at Lahore Airport and expressed solidarity with them. He should have been more cautious; the hijacking could have been sponsored by the Indian government to help find

an excuse to sever the air link between East and West Pakistan. Bhutto, who was acclaimed as highly intelligent, should have seen the implications of the hijacking incident. His handshake with the hijackers could not be without a political purpose because as soon as the plane was blown up, India instantly closed the air route above it. Pakistan was forced to fly its aircraft via Sri Lanka, which luckily had a friendly and bold government. Without the Sri Lankan permission to land, even this tenuous aerial link between East and West Pakistan would have been broken or put through severe strain—C-130 military aircraft would not have been able to fly direct to Dacca without landing for refuelling.

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On 6 February, I got an order from Brigadier (later Major General) Iskandarul Karim, CMLA HQ, stating that the president wanted Mujib to come to Islamabad to provide clarity on certain points. I rang up Mujib and conveyed the message, asking for a date so I could arrange for his passage. He said, 'Why is another meeting necessary? The president was here only a few days back. We had extensive discussions. In any case, we have to, as majority party in the Assembly, prepare and present the constitution. My party and I are busy doing that. My party's executive committee is meeting on 14, 15, and 16 February to consider the draft of the Constitution. Instead of me going there, the president himself should come over to Dacca, by 21 February latest, so that he is fully briefed by me.' I passed on his message to Brigadier Karim; he was not happy with Mujib's response.

The reaction to the president calling Mujib to Islamabad was severe, and was subjected to harsh criticism in the Awami League circles. They insisted that he should not fall prey to the conspiracies being hatched by Bhutto, the president, and the army, who were perceived as safeguarding the privileges and the domination of West Pakistani exploiters and looters. They said that Mujib was being called to Islamabad so that he could be killed there. According to them, Suhrawardy was killed by the intelligence agency of West Pakistan in Beirut.

Three federal ministers along with Brigadier Karim arrived in Dacca on 9 February to persuade Mujib but to no avail; he refused to go to Islamabad. His detractors used his refusal as propaganda. They projected it as a sign of his disloyalty. I spoke to him again and he eventually agreed, though reluctantly, to reach Islamabad on 19 February. This was conveyed to the CMLA HQ. Bhutto must have realized that since Mujib had accepted the invite, this meant that his test theory was about to fail. So he issued a statement on 18 February saying that Dacca would be a slaughterhouse for West Pakistanis, and that West Pakistan; MNAs would be held 'double hostages'.

People in East Pakistan felt this statement was meant to provoke Mujib to defy the president's orders. If that was the case, the plan worked perfectly. Mujib rang me up and said that he was not going to Islamabad, stating, 'If Dacca is a slaughterhouse for West Pakistan, then Islamabad is a slaughterhouse for East Pakistanis.' Thus, another door to a political settlement was shut. We were now clearly on a collision course and heading towards confrontation between East and West Pakistan.

The president called a meeting of all governors and MLAs for 22 February. Ahsan and Yaqub were to attend from East Pakistan. I was called a few days earlier to meet the president, and along with Gen. Peerzada, met him in his office on 19 February. As soon as we sat down, the president expressed his frustration with Mujib and so I reminded him of Mujib's current position as an elected representative of the people who now represented the whole of Pakistan. Yahya was really angry and had already made up his mind to postpone the National Assembly session. I warned him that the decision would lead to military action. I explained how he had four possible occasions to take strong action. 'You may take it now. I do not suggest it. Let the session take place. The second occasion will arise when Mujib presents his proposed constitution and the West Pakistani leaders (not you) find it unacceptable. Then, they should come to you and you may take action. That also I do not recommend; I suggest that the West Pakistani leaders should take political steps to get the proposed constitution amended suitably by taking all the measures in accordance with established parliamentary practices. The third occasion would be if the bill is bulldozed through parliament, and is passed through the House without caring for the West Pakistani view. It will come to you for signature, you may refuse to sign the bill and take military action. I do not recommend that either. I recommend that you hand over power to Mujib. I assure that he will be the most unpopular man in East Pakistan within six months.' The president did not accept my counsel and insisted on taking strong action.

Having failed to convince him, I said, 'Sir, in case of strong action, you must appear to be even-handed; some sort of action should be taken against the West Pakistani leadership as well. I have seen that in East Pakistan, if your action is not immediate and strong, the situation escalates and then gets out of hand. If you decide to take action, as you are planning to do, then please impose a ban on political activity and meetings, and impose press censorship in both wings. Otherwise it will be impossible to control the situation.' Although he agreed to this suggestion, he did not implement it. All that he did was announce that the assembly session was postponed.

At the end of the interview, I requested to be heard in private as I had met Mujib before I came and wanted to convey to the president what I had discussed with him. Gen. Peerzada left and we were alone. It was then that I communicated Mujib's words to the president: 'I have no differences with Bhutto. There are no differences on the Six Points. We both want the army to stay out of politics. They have been ruling the country for too long. The difference is that I want the army out of power, while he wants the army destroyed. He agrees with the Six Points but he wants a share in power. During our meeting, Bhutto had proposed that the prime minister be from East Pakistan (me), the president from West Pakistan (Bhutto). I said that I could not allow him to do that; I was the leader of whole of Pakistan and as majority leader of the House, it was my prerogative to nominate a president who will no doubt be from West Pakistan. I also told him that I had already promised the position to somebody. Bhutto retorted by suggesting that he would nominate the same

person I had in mind. I said even then I would not abdicate my authority and responsibility.' Mujib continued, 'You know, Farman, what would have happened if I had allowed him to nominate the president? He would have nominated himself and then dismissed me within ten days.'

I related this story and asked the president to reconsider his decision about Mujib. Having been disappointed by Mujib earlier, he said that he could not trust him. I got up to leave. Unexpectedly, he came to the door to see me off and what he said then shook me, 'I am not afraid for myself. West Pakistan is my base. I have to look after it.' I got the feeling that the president was under tremendous pressure from the generals in West Pakistan to do what Bhutto wanted. Since his early days in politics, Bhutto had especially cultivated friendships with senior army officers.[4] He had prompted Yahya to take over from Ayub, and he was in regular communication with the others.

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The background to Yahya's fear was a rumour going around during his Dacca visit that Hamid had taken over from Yahya. This was reinforced by Hamid's presence with Yahya on all occasions in civilian clothing. The BBC correspondent in Dacca had even pointedly asked Yahya whether he was still in power to which Yahya had replied in the affirmative. During a visit to the CMLA HQ, I asked Brig. Haider Jang, who was Brig. ML Affairs, about the story. He told me that the MLA HQ Lahore had thoroughly inquired into it. As it turns out, one night, Mahmud Ali Kasuri rang up Mahmud of the APP to say that Hamid

had taken over from Yahya. When asked whether this was from his boss (Bhutto), he said yes. Thus the news spread, and the friendliness between the two at the Larkana get-together further consolidated it.

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The National Assembly had been scheduled to meet on 3 March to frame the constitution. Elections had been held, and the armed forces had performed their responsibilities well. President Yahya, however, made one big mistake; he kept the office of the president up for grabs. Hence a tussle ensued in the name of equity for the rights of the two wings of Pakistan. We saw a new theory being propounded which indirectly indicated a desire to have two prime ministers in one country, one in East and the other in West Pakistan. A news item had earlier appeared, originating from an American news agency correspondent, saying that in an interview with the said correspondent, Bhutto had suggested two prime ministers. The Awami League also hinted at and later officially asked for two constituent assemblies, two constitutions, and two governments—very nearly a confederation. The political leadership of the two wings had become irreconcilable. Yahya was faced with a dilemma. If he favoured West Pakistan, the army would be dubbed 'West Pakistani' and would face an uprising in East Pakistan. If he supported the East Pakistani leaders, he would be overthrown, as some serving generals were with Bhutto and wholeheartedly supported him in his 'crusade' against East Pakistani domination. 'We will not allow East Pakistan to rule over us,' was their accepted theme.

If the idea of having two prime ministers was not met with approval, then Bhutto wanted a share in the central government by having his nominee as president of the republic. The nominee was to be himself. As Mr G. W. Chaudhry has said, 'There were two "P"s available to the leaders of political parties. "P" for Pakistan and "P" for Power. Both the leaders of West Pakistan and East Pakistan chose the "P" for Power.'

During my two-hour meeting with President Yahya on 10 February, I failed to convince him to not derail the democratic process, which would culminate in a handover of power to the leader of the majority party in the National Assembly. I went to Peerzada and requested that he try to persuade the president. He attempted to, but came out saying that his efforts had not been fruitful and asked me what should be done. I said, in Urdu, '*Jhaun-pari mil rahi hai, mahal nahi mil raha. Jhaun-pari lay lain.*' He did not understand what I had said so I spoke in English, 'Sir, we can get a weak centre, not a strong one. We should try to have a relationship between East and West Pakistan with a *kacha dhaga* (weak thread). We can make the ties stronger later as East Pakistan will need our assistance.'

The meeting of the governors and MLAs took place on 21 and 22 February. I was not allowed to attend the meeting as I was neither a governor nor an MLA, but what was being decided perturbed me. Confrontation with Mujib after he had gotten majority votes would lead to serious trouble and may harm the unity of Pakistan. I met a number of influential people who agreed that the situation was critical but were unwilling to take the right step. In desperation, I went to see Omar at his residence

on Harley Street; he was chief of national security and enjoyed the confidence of both Yahya and Hamid. I took about an hour to explain my point of view and my worries about the future of the country.

I had only had official dealings with the people who were in power. I had no personal understanding or equation to influence them. Omar, however, was close to them. I requested, pleaded, and virtually begged him to use his influence to avert the impending tragedy, and he promised to do what he could. He might have tried to do what he promised but he was the one who ultimately forced Yahya to take military action in Dacca when talks failed. He personally told me that, if not for him, Yahya would not have taken military action. My pleas had been wasted.

# 5

# Into a Blind Alley

TO ATTEND THE MEETING OF GOVERNORS AND MLAS CALLED for 22 February, we were staying in the East Pakistan House, where the Supreme Court is now located. Governor Ahsan and MLA Yaqub were in the governor's suite and I was in the VIP wing. Early in the morning, the day after the meeting, they called me over. They had perhaps stayed awake the whole night discussing the situation. I was given a briefing on what had transpired in the meeting where the final verdict was the decision to postpone the National Assembly session. My immediate reaction was, 'That means military action.' Yaqub agreed with what I surmised. All three of us agreed that the decision was wrong, and decided to tell the president in writing. Yaqub wrote a letter to Gen. Peerzada in his own hand, with us contributing. The letter made it quite clear that in case of military action, Indian intervention was likely; they would never miss the opportunity. One might ask why Ahsan and Yaqub had not expressed their views in stronger terms in the previous evening's meeting. Peerzada and the president might have been thinking the same thing when they received our letter. They must have thought that I was behind it. I was ordered to go back to Dacca and I left the same day.

Ahsan and Yaqub also returned to Dacca on 27 February. On enquiring as to what happened after I left, they told

me that they were called by the president, who stated that he was willing to accept their views but only if they convinced Bhutto to do the same since he was the one insisting on postponement. So, they went to Karachi and both of them met Bhutto. According to them, Bhutto said, 'You need not be apprehensive about the reaction of East Pakistan. The Awami League is a bourgeois party. It is not a party of the masses; it cannot fight a guerrilla war. There will be no violent conflict in East Pakistan ...'[5]

They returned to Rawalpindi and apprised the president. They were told to return to Dacca and tell Mujib on 28 February that the postponement would be announced on the first of the next month. To this, I reacted by saying, 'Please do not warn them beforehand. They will make thorough preparations in the meantime.' But Governor Ahsan had orders and Mujib, Tajuddin, and Dr Kamal Hossain arrived on the evening of the 28th to meet him. Ahsan informed them of the president's decision to indefinitely postpone the NA session. Tajuddin's reaction was sharp and violent. He said, 'We knew all along that you will not hand power over to us through constitutional means.' Given the gloom and depression that everyone now felt, a lengthy discussion was not possible. After a pause, Mujib asked his two colleagues to go out and, when he was alone, requested a new date, stating that he would be able to control the crowd. If Mujib wanted separation, this postponement had created an ideal situation for him. He could exploit it in his favour. Nevertheless, the very fact that he asked for a new NA session date shows that his first priority was to become the prime minister of Pakistan.

After Mujib had departed, the three of us continued to discuss the serious repercussions of the decision. We were of the opinion that once a bullet is fired, East Pakistan was gone. We wanted to avoid confrontation, and decided to inform the president once again. Ahsan drafted a historic signal which said, 'I beg of you to announce a fresh date tonight. Tomorrow will be too late.' A signal had to be sent because, despite our frantic efforts, the governor of the most sensitive and explosive province was not able to talk to the president over the telephone. With great difficulty, we got to Gen. Hamid in Sialkot and requested that he convey our plea to the president. There was no response. A fresh date was not to be announced on that crucial day.

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When the postponement was announced on 1 March, each and every individual of Bengali origin reacted aggressively; they felt betrayed. The whole Bengali nation was now on the warpath. The die had been cast. There is no doubt in my mind that the breakup of Pakistan took place on 1 March with the announcement. The subsequent events were only a natural follow-through of the main event.

Within minutes of the announcement over the radio, people from various walks of life skipped work and started gathering outside Hotel Purbani where Sheikh Mujib and his MNAs held a session. The mob was armed with bamboo sticks, spears, iron rods, and other such weapons. The crowd at the Dacca cricket stadium, where BCCP XI was playing against the International XI, reacted sharply to the announcement. They swarmed the playing

field, shouting slogans against the postponement, and demanded immediate closure of the match. This was done promptly and the players were escorted to safety. The entire staff at the provincial secretariat left work and came out of their offices immediately.

The lawyers of Dacca High Court took out a procession. All agitators, joined by groups of slogan-chanting students, headed for Hotel Purbani to hear Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. At his press conference in the afternoon, he expressed his determination to challenge the decision. He called for a complete strike on 2 March in Dacca, to be followed by a province-wide strike on the 3rd, to measure his own strength and to make the administration feel the impact of the public reaction.

Later that day, crowds gathered at Paltan Maidan to listen to the speeches of Tofail Ahmed, a former president of EPSL and an MNA elect, and Mannan of Jatiyo Sramik League, the Awami League labour front. It was evident from the mood of the crowd that mere speeches did nothing to satisfy them in the least; they wanted action. Some miscreants set fire to the property of non-locals in the Jinnah Avenue area. This was followed by cases of looting in the Nawabpur area.

More alarming was the news from the Narayanganj Rifle Club, where a gang of students forcibly took away seven rifles and three thousand rounds of ammunition. PIA employees also missed work in protest which brought the schedule of domestic flights to a standstill. People were seen gathering in small groups at various points in the city towards the evening, but they dispersed at nightfall.

Thus, 1 March came to an end with an uneasy atmosphere and the fear of persecution in the minds of the non-local populace. This day also saw the ouster of Admiral S. M. Ahsan as governor of East Pakistan; MLA General Yaqub was charged with the additional responsibility of acting as governor. Ahsan's removal was badly done. While waiting for a reply to the signal sent to the President, Ahsan, Yaqub, and I were discussing the general situation in the Governor House. At around 10 p.m., the telephone rang and Ahsan picked it up. It was Gen. Peerzada asking for Yaqub. Ahsan handed over the handset to Yaqub, who, after putting the telephone down, said, 'I am the governor now'. His announcement was met with silence. Ahsan was thinking aloud when he said, 'I will take some time to pack up. I will arrange a boat to go to Chittagong. My books are lying all over the place. I will vacate the house as soon as I possibly can.' Yaqub, surprisingly, did not utter a word of consolation. Perhaps, he was too preoccupied with his own thoughts. Instead, he left for the cantonment. After seeing him off, I came back to Ahsan who had gone to his room. I saw him picking up things from one place and putting them in another. He was lost in thought. He did not want to be governor in the first place. Why did the president disgrace him like this? Is this the fate of people who serve their country with the greatest sincerity and devotion?

Interrupting his thoughts, I said, 'Sir, you are not going anywhere till we make arrangements for your travel to West Pakistan. You stay here.'

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The dawn of the 2nd was greeted by militant groups of students and workers who erected roadblocks at various places on the streets of Dacca. Arrangements were in place to make the strike successful, and hence it was a great success. No vehicle could move on the streets, no business was carried out by anyone, and no office of the civil government functioned. Large processions were taken out from various places. In the forenoon, while they were trying to clear the farm gate, a stray army vehicle barged into the crowd from the opposite direction and the newly arrived *jawans* were subjected to brickbats. They responded with aerial firing of no more than three to four bullets. Unfortunately, this incident coincided with one in which a student was accidently killed by his instructor with a .22 rifle in the same vicinity. The students capitalized on this, exhibiting the blood-stained shirt of the dead student in the streets, and accusing the army of manslaughter. This stirred the emotions of the masses.

Students held meetings condemning the postponement and the use of brute force by the army. Eqbal Hall of Dacca University was renamed Sergeant Zahurul Haq Hall and Jinnah Hall became Joti Sen Hall. The national flag and photographs of the Quaid-i-Azam were burned, and the flag of *Shadhin Bangla* (Independent Bengal) was hoisted. Subsequently, the national flag was lowered from many other official buildings including the Secretariat and the High Court. Miscreants thrived on the opportunities thus provided and by afternoon had looted and burned many shops of non-Bengalis. Some houses of non-Bengalis were also ransacked.

In the midst of this free-for-all, the NAP (Muzaffar Group) held a public meeting at Paltan Maidan, and the Bengal National League (BNL) at Baitual Mukarram. Prof Muzaffar Ahmed and Motia Chaudhry addressed the NAP meeting, while the BNL meeting was addressed by Ataur Rehman and Amina Begum. The fiery speeches at these meetings further encouraged the miscreants. While moving homewards after the meetings, they started plundering and burning shops of non-locals at Jinnah Avenue, Nawabpur Road, Thatari Bazaar, Kakrail, Shanti Nagar, and other areas. An arms shop at Baitul Mukarram was also looted.[6]

Panic prevailed amongst the non-local communities of these areas. By the time it was dark, the situation had gone beyond the police's control and, as a last resort at the behest of the IG police, the home secretary, and the chief secretary, curfew was imposed in the entire city from 9 p.m. on 2 March to 7 a.m. on the 3rd. Troops, however, could not reach the respective positions till 10:30 a.m. because of numerous roadblocks. Curfew was violated at a number of places as Sheikh Mujib had asked the people to resist the alleged suppression. He did this despite the president's assurance of good intentions behind the postponement. The president had advised him to act coolly and calmly and not to do anything to aggravate the law and order situation. He paid no heed, and continued defying the authorities and inciting the people to take the law into their own hands.[7] On 2 March, forces on duty had to open fire at more than one place, leaving nine dead and fifty-one wounded.

In other towns, the situation was comparatively better

but protest marches were taken out and national flags were burned at almost every place. In Comilla, two EPR sepoys were stripped naked by the students. The EPR Field Security section's telephone was tapped and the detachment was harassed. Their office had to be shifted to EPR Wing Headquarters to ensure their safety.

By the morning of the 3rd, everything had come to a standstill. East Pakistan was virtually cut off from the rest of the world as communication links between Dacca and West Pakistan were taken over by the Awami League. The only communication links which remained were the army and the Air Force telephones. Life remained at a standstill for the second consecutive day throughout the province, and the strike was again a complete success.

As soon as curfew was lifted in the morning, the miscreants resumed the arson, looting, and killing. The police and the EPR patrolled the city area but were rendered almost ineffective. A few shops in Jinnah Avenue and Baitul Mukarram were ransacked and looted. The non-Bengalis of Nawabpur, Islampur, and Thateri Bazaar had to confine themselves to their houses, helplessly watching the plundering of their property at the hands of local thugs. It was the 'raj' of lawlessness. The people's mood was extremely hostile.

By 3 p.m., a human sea of 'joy Bangla' chanting militants was seen at Paltan Maidan, anxiously waiting for the go-ahead from their leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who was to address them soon. Armed with bamboo sticks, they had come to hear the Declaration of Independence of 'Bangladesh' by the Bangabandhu. The EPSL carried nine dead bodies to the meeting and accused the army

of killing thousands of people. The demand of 'Shadhin Bangla' was written all over their faces.

Sheikh Mujib, however, acted with restraint and condemned acts of arson, looting, and killing. He told his listeners to remain peaceful and maintain harmony between locals and non-locals. Sheikh Mujib expressed 'sympathy' for the sufferers of lawlessness, and tried to instil confidence in the non-Bengalis, who were panic-stricken. He also demanded that the curfew be lifted and guaranteed law and order on the condition that the troops move back to the barracks.

He called to continue the strike and the non-cooperation movement until their demands were met. He also urged the civil servants to join the non-cooperation movement and asked people not to pay taxes. Using a tone indicative of an ultimatum, he gave the regime time till 7 March to make up their mind to resolve the crisis and said he would announce his future line of action on that day. He did not lead any procession, which had been planned earlier by his young rebellious lieutenants. The crowd, though disappointed, obeyed their leader and dispersed.

In his heart, Sheikh Mujib was apprehensive of the intentions of radicals and Naxalite communists in the province who were looking for trouble. It was a great disappointment for the subversive elements who had been waiting in hiding for things to take a chaotic turn. Mujib tried to push the blame on the extremist elements for engineering lawlessness under the guidance of Maulana Bhashani, whose aim, according to him, was to discredit Mujib and bring him into conflict with ML authorities. At the same time, seeing how people felt, he

was also apprehensive of Maulana Bhashani stealing the show by outbidding him in declaring independence. This could undermine his own position with his party and the masses. Mujib, at this stage, outwardly appeared under considerable pressure from his power-hungry party members who wanted him to unilaterally declare an independent Bangladesh. The threat of the communists, however, was worrying him even more, and in order to maintain his grip over the people without coming in direct conflict with the extremists, he advocated the formation of a provisional government under a presidential order as soon as possible.

The law and order situation in some other parts of the province was even worse on 3 and 4 March. Chittagong, being the worst hit, looked like an Indian town of the pre-independence riot days of 1947. The local fanatics had gone berserk; they wanted to exterminate the entire non-local population. Kidnapping and raping non-local young girls and throwing children into burning houses was unheard of in Pakistan since its inception. Sadly, this is what actually happened.

Innumerable lives were lost at Pahartali and other colonies of non-locals. Their properties were burned, and the treatment meted out to the children and women was simply horrifying. It was an outburst of the simmering hatred towards non-Bengalis fanned by the opportunists. Khulna, Rangpur, and Rajshahi also had their share of local and non-local clashes. The exact number of casualties at Chittagong may not be known but the local press put the death toll at over a hundred dead with more than three hundred wounded in two days.[8] In Chittagong alone, 1,500

huts were set on fire and 10,000 people rendered homeless. A chief petty officer of the Pakistan Navy, working for the ISI, was also among the dead. In Khulna, the number of dead was forty-one.

This was the state of affairs which sent the non-local population fleeing towards Dacca airport in a bid to save their lives and those of their women and children. Dacca airport resembled a 1947 refugee camp when the fleeing Indian Muslims awaited their evacuation to Pakistan. The sight was pathetic. It also, in a way, reflected the mood of the local fanatics and the fact that Sheikh Mujib's assurance to the non-local populace for protection of their lives and property had failed to instil confidence in their minds, and was no more than lip service.

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The situation in the province was changing rapidly. There were occasions when immediate political decisions were required, which could only be given by the president. His presence in Dacca was the need of the hour. Sheikh Mujib had already refused to sit in the RTC called by the president for 9 March. He was due to speak on 7 March and something had to be done to take the wind out of his sails before he spoke. The president did not come, but announced 25 March as the new date for the inaugural session of the National Assembly. The East Pakistanis resented the tone of his 6 March broadcast and Mujib felt bitter at being held solely responsible for the crisis. Things were moving at such manic speed that by the end of the first week of the month, the province saw the exit of its MLA, General Yaqub. His only mistake was that he had

requested the president to come to Dacca to defuse the situation but the latter refused to accept it.

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It was the evening of 4 March 1971, when former governor Ahsan was given a send-off. Though the atmosphere was tense in Dacca, a large number of Ahsan's well-wishers had come to the airport. Ahsan was a very popular person in East Pakistan and people from all sections of the public embraced him with great affection; he had won their hearts by being friendly, fair, and understanding. One would love to have the send-off Ahsan received. His entire staff wept as he departed and there were very few who did not have tears in their eyes.

After seeing him off, we went to Yaqub's house, where Gen. Khadim and I, along with our wives, had dinner. The telephone rang at about 10 p.m. and Yaqub answered. We only heard, 'Yes, Yes, Yes. In that case, accept my resignation.' Both of us, Khadim and I, asked Yaqub to convey our resignations as well but he did not. Instead, he told us that Gen. Peerzada had called to inform that the president was not coming to Dacca. This was why Yaqub had tendered his resignation. We agreed with him but asked him why he did not convey our views as well. He said that would be considered rebellion, and all of us would then have to be court martialled.[9]

We were still discussing the latest development when the telephone rang again. It was Peerzada again who wanted me to come to Rawalpindi and brief the president. Since Yaqub had resigned and Khadim was commanding the troops, I was the only one who could be spared from

East Pakistan to go. I was to leave on a PIA flight which would depart from Dacca at about 11 p.m. I asked my wife to pack a suitcase for me, and requested Yaqub to allow me to go and see Mujib before departure, so that my briefing to the president could be as complete as possible. I asked Khadim to tell the PIA to wait for me. As there was a state of emergency, PIA accepted the request. Then I rang up Mujib and asked him whether I could come over to see him. Despite the time, he readily agreed.

All over Dacca, small arms were being fired. I did not want to risk anyone else's life so I drove a small car myself to Mujib's house in Dhanmandi. There was a cordon of Awami League security guards outside his house who let me enter since they knew me. Mujib was waiting alone. Since I was in a hurry, I started the conversation without any preliminaries or pleasantries. I asked him if Pakistan could be saved. My question reveals the seriousness of the situation and the agony in which we all were in East Pakistan. His replied in the affirmative, saying, 'It can be saved if somebody listens to us. So many people are being killed by the army. They listen to Bhutto. They do not listen to me. Even now, even after all this, we are willing to discuss.'

Before he could elaborate, I spotted a shadow on the wall. I told him that somebody was eavesdropping. He got up saying there cannot be anybody. However, upon seeing the person, I heard him invite him in. It was Tajuddin, the die-hard, pro-India, Awami Leaguer. He hated West Pakistan and perhaps Pakistan itself. Mujib recounted our conversation to Tajuddin who shared the same opinion as Mujib. He said, 'Yes, it could be but under a new formula.

We cannot, after all this butchery, sit with Bhutto under the same roof. He is responsible for all this. Let the assembly be divided into two houses, one for East and the other for West Pakistan. Each assembly should write the constitution for its own Wing. Then the two assemblies should meet to write a constitution for Pakistan'. When I said that they would have to sit with Bhutto, they responded with: 'but that will be as equals'.[10] What they were suggesting was a formula for a confederation. I told them this was not a solution to save Pakistan. However, I promised to convey their thoughts to the president when I met him, which I did.

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In his demands, Sheikh Mujib had the support of almost all the prominent leaders of the province. Maulana Bhashani thought it better at that moment to go along with the Sheikh. NAP (Bhashani), NAP (Muzaffar), and Atta ur Rahman's Bangla National League—along with the communists—were expected to cause trouble if Sheikh Mujib accepted anything short of an independent Bangladesh.

President Yahya Khan had sent a special message for Sheikh Mujib on 6 March, asking him to exercise restraint and not make an irreversible decision. He indicated that he would be coming soon and would offer him more than six points. The message was handed over by Brig. (later Lt Gen.) Jilani. Mujib carried this message till the creation of Bangladesh and showed it to everybody who met him.

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I had left for Rawalpindi on the night of the 4th.[11, 12] The flight arrived in Karachi via Sri Lanka. There was no direct flight available for Islamabad so I boarded the plane to Lahore where I changed to a Fokker. At Lahore, while boarding the plane, I saw General Tikka Khan boarding ahead of me. I immediately concluded that he was to replace Yaqub. As his seat was adjacent to mine, I asked him why he was coming to Dacca. He said that he had been called to see the president, who would give instructions. I told him that I was also going to see the president. Then I outlined the situation in East Pakistan briefly. The Tikka Khan I knew was a straightforward, honest, and obedient soldier, a man with determination and a strong will. He sounded very optimistic and thought he could handle the situation. He was not, however, the politician the situation demanded, and when appointed governor, could not show flexibility even when he wanted to, previously because of a habit of obeying his superior's orders and later, because of General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi's uncooperativeness.

We both went straight from the airport to the CMLA HQ. I was the first to be called to see the president. It was about 11 a.m. on the 5th. I had expected the president to be in his office. Instead he was sitting in the rear veranda of his house. With him were General Hamid and Bhutto; all three were drinking. Yahya was barefoot and had his feet up on the table in front of him. I thought of Nero while Rome burned.

I saluted. He asked me to take a chair, which I did. His next question was about the situation. I said, 'Sir, what I am going to tell you is likely to embarrass Bhutto. May I

request …' Before I could complete my sentence, Bhutto picked up his glass and went out. I gave a detailed situation report, telling him how grave the situation was, and how urgent action was required. I also told him about my meeting with Mujib. When I told him that the situation had gone beyond six points, he invited me to dinner that evening, saying that he was recording a speech to handle that situation.[13]

General Hamid and General Tikka were there when I arrived in the evening. President Yahya, I was told, was getting his speech recorded. Soon afterwards, he came out looking flushed and annoyed. He told me that the speech would be played tomorrow and would answer the questions related to East Pakistan. Then he turned towards General Hamid and questioned him about the current situation with Yaqub, asking when he was going to be court martialled. Hamid said that an inquiry was underway, and that he would keep him updated. Yahya looked at me and said, 'I will court martial all of you. Yaqub has chickened out. He has left his post while on active duty.'[14] Knowing the charge to be a serious one, I clarified that Yaqub had not left his post and was still the corps commander. He had not handed over yet; only resigned. Yahya assumed that I was defending him because of our friendship and stated that Yaqub was his friend as well. At the first opportunity, I rang up Yaqub and asked him not to hand over. This was fortunate because General Khadim later told me that had it not been for my message, he was handing over and going to Sylhet to relax.

Before dinner, the president instructed Tikka to go to Dacca immediately. He was not to do anything about

law and order but to keep the army in the barracks. He expected the Bengalis to fight it out amongst themselves and the situation to become such that army help would have to be requested. This could be appropriate under normal conditions. In East Pakistan, however, the army was running the whole show. Martial law was in effect. It was our duty to protect the life, property, and honour of the people, and we were shirking our responsibility. I expressed my views but Tikka agreed to do as the president directed.

While we were stopping over in Karachi on our way to Dacca, the president's speech was broadcast over the intercommunication system of the aircraft. Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo was also travelling on the same plane. As the doors opened he said, 'He has got what he wanted.' He was referring to Bhutto (the general impression was that he had written the speech).

When we were landing at Dacca on 7 March, Mujib was addressing a gathering of approximately 700,000 people. As the airplane flew over them, one saw a sea of people. I turned towards General Tikka and said, 'This is what happens in Dacca'.

The speech was over by the time we reached the martial law headquarters. Yaqub was there, looking small and dejected. A conference had to take place as the first thing Tikka had to face was an ultimatum from the radio authorities saying they wanted to rebroadcast a recording of Mujib's speech and, if they were not permitted to do so, would boycott the system. How could one allow a virulent, poisonous, anti-state speech to be broadcast over government-controlled media? The people were

with Mujib though. Tikka referred the problem to the Centre. The CMLA HQ feared a unilateral declaration of independence; anything less than that was acceptable. Mujib had, quite cleverly, not declared UDI. His change of plans was because of the threat which Gen. Khadim Hussain Raja had given him a day earlier.[15]

The radio was allowed to broadcast the speech. They would have done it in any case because, from 7 March onwards, every agency of the government worked under Sheikh Mujib's orders. That the central government was completely helpless was apparent. And yet no political action commensurate with the collapsing situation was being taken in Rawalpindi.

# 6

# A Ghost Government

IN HIS 7 MARCH 1971 SPEECH, MUJIB HAD CALLED TO CONTINUE the 'non-violence' and non-cooperation movements on a large scale. Gauging the sentiments of his people, he lay down the following preconditions for the Awami League's participation in the 25 March National Assembly session:

a. Immediate withdrawal of martial law;
b. Transfer of power to the elected representative of the people;
c. Withdrawal of troops to the barracks; and
d. Enquiry into the incidents where the army opened fire and killed a number of people.

Besides these, the Sheikh directed the people not to pay taxes; called on all government and semi-government officials to continue observing the strike; called for the denial of railways and ports for military purposes; ordered the radio, TV, and the press to only broadcast Bangladesh-oriented programmes; ordered for telecommunications to work only within Bangladesh; ordered banks not to affect remittances to West Pakistan; directed the police to maintain law and order with the assistance of the Bengali EPR; and ordered educational institutions to remain closed.

By calling them the 'Bengali EPR', he tried to undermine the loyalty the troops owed to their senior West Pakistani officers; he wanted them to obey the East Pakistani officers only. In doing so, he was prompting the Bengali troops to mutiny. The next day, the Awami League's directive was issued.

In simple terms, he had taken over the government. A parallel government had been established. The four demands received wholehearted support from every quarter in East Pakistan and from some politicians of West Pakistan as well. The tirade against the army reached its peak when, besides hurling abuses, they tried to starve the army within the confines of the cantonments. All information media, intellectuals, writers, poets, and singers took part in insulting the army and condemning it on all forums, including on the radio and TV. The extent of their falsehood knew no bounds.

The law and order situation deteriorated further when a large number of prisoners, both under trial and convicts, escaped by breaking open the jail gates at Dacca, Narayanganj, Comilla, Barisal, and Bogra. This was done in connivance with the jail authorities who were dancing to the Awami League's tune. Approximately three-hundred and fifty prisoners escaped in Dacca alone.[16] The news of mass collection of arms and ammunition at various places, including the Dacca University Campus, further aggravated the already grim situation. The police chief was the first to defect, with his police force fully cooperating with, and playing into the hands of, the Awami League commands.

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Despite the president's announcement and his expected arrival in Dacca in five or six days, the non-cooperation movement continued to gain momentum. It was soon joined by the Bengali officers and staff of government, semi-government, and autonomous bodies. It peaked on 12 March when all CSP and East Pakistan Civil Services' (EPCS) officers extended support to Sheikh Mujib officially, and expressed their readiness to take orders from the Awami League High Command. It was obvious that these officers did not want to become party to any action which the ML administration may decide to take.

When the senior officials of the province met the new MLA General Tikka Khan on 7 March, their attitude was that of indifference. It was obvious that they were committed to the movement as they were part and parcel of the same outfit. The result of all this was that the Provincial Secretariat was functioning at the Sheikh's residence in Dhanmandi instead of Eden Building. All government departments—including radio, television, telephone, telegraph, and railways—were strictly following the directives of the Awami League High Command. Intelligence agencies crossed the floor and joined the Awami League camp as well.

The 'ghost government' had come into being with the police at the forefront. The height of defiance was when the chief justice of the province declined to administer oath of office to the new governor-designate. He was, obviously, acting under instructions of the Awami League High Command. Sheikh Mujib not only refused to cooperate, but also turned down an invitation to meet the governor in the Governor House, and wanted the general to come to him at his Dhanmandi residence.

Without the cooperation of the civil administration, it was becoming almost impossible for martial law authorities to run the show, particularly when the entire populace was defiant. It was here that the need for severe action was felt to crush this rebellion, which was cloaked as non-cooperation action. The army and ML were put to test when they had to exercise extreme restraint pending the president's last minute effort to seek a political solution.

In Sheikh's view, the Six Points theory was now outdated. What he now proposed as a political solution was a confederation of East and West Pakistan. He suggested that:

a. Power be handed over to separate prime ministers in East and West Pakistan.
b. Two constituent assemblies be convened to frame separate constitutions.
c. The president was to remain at the Centre to coordinate defence and foreign affairs.
d. Two C-in-Cs should be appointed with a supreme commander at the Centre.
e. At a later date, the two Pakistans should surrender mutually-agreed powers to form a government of Pakistan resulting in one Pakistan internationally but two separate Pakistan's nationally.

Sheikh Mujib went as far as to appeal to the Secretary General of the United Nations, U Thant, against the alleged denial of human rights to the seventy-five million people of Bangladesh. Subsequently, he tried to justify this as merely an attempt to halt the exodus of foreigners from East Pakistan.

On 9 March, we arranged for a direct telephone conversation between Yahya and Mujib regarding the army communication network as civil communication systems had been taken over by the Awami League. Such was the plight of the government authority.

Yahya proposed that an RTC be held in which all parties who had secured seats in the National Assembly be represented. Mujib agreed but, on meeting resistance from his hard-line colleagues, backed out saying that the representative system in the proposed RTC would convert him into a minority party. Having failed in his attempts to resolve the entanglement, the president decided to come to Dacca. When Mujib was told of the president's intentions, he issued a statement saying that they would accept Yahya as their guest but not as president. The President House had been taken over by the Awami League; they agreed to hand it over and restore its electricity and water, which had been cut off.

The president arrived in Dacca on 15 March. A meeting was held the next day, which was attended by most of the senior West Pakistani officers in Dacca. After reviewing the situation, the president made a very startling remark: 'The father of the nation was not averse to the idea of two Pakistans. Who am I to oppose such an idea?' The idea of an independent Muslim majority, Greater Bengal had been floated by Suhrawardy in 1947 and, recently, Bhutto too had talked about two prime ministers.

Group Captain Masud and I were the only ones who expressed their concern over the situation and the dangers of military action.[17] The president ruled out a breakdown of talks with what appeared to be his very

liberal approach of even accepting a confederation. We were sure that the problem could be resolved within the concept of a federation, which gave wider powers given to East Pakistan.

A series of talks between Mujib and the president began. There were a few rounds of talks between their advisors as well. Gen. Peerzada, Cornelius, M. M. Ahmed, and Colonel Hasan assisted Yahya while Mujib's team consisted of Kamal, Tajuddin, and Khandakar Mushtaq Ahmed. The agenda of these talks was kept secret and no one commented on the subject. On the one hand, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman stated that the talks were making some progress while, on the other hand, he continued advocating the cause of 'Bangla Desh'.

Throughout this period, students, labourers, and other organizations continued their processions and meetings. Sheikh Mujib would address processions in front of his residence almost daily, urging the people to continue the non-cooperation movement. Some of his militant lieutenants were not fully satisfied with the talks and seemed to want a rebellion in the name of 'Bangla Desh'. These included Tajuddin, Nazar-ul-Islam, Colonel Osmani, Captain Mansoor Ali, Mannan, and all the members of the Students' League. While talks were going on, the Awami League workers continued collecting arms and ammunition, and preparing for a confrontation with the Armed Forces.

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We in the martial law headquarters, sitting in the cantonment five miles away from the President House,

were kept in the dark regarding the state of negotiations. Our only sources of information were the telexes and signals sent from the President House to Bhutto and others in West Pakistan. Even General Tikka was not on the negotiating team and was as uniformed as the rest of us.

Out of frustration, I rang up Mujib on 19 March to get some information from him. He told me that they had arrived at an agreement and the president would issue a proclamation, which would contain the outline of arrangements for the transfer of power. He also stated that he was to be prime minister with five ministers each from West and East Pakistan. I asked whether he was satisfied with the arrangement. He said yes and asked for prayers for his success.

It was essential that this agreement be approved by Bhutto. Mujib had refused to even talk to Bhutto. The president suggested proximity talks, which he accepted. Bhutto was invited and arrived in Dacca on 21 March. Though the Awami League had promised to receive him and provide with protection, we were worried about his safety. Brigadier Jahanzeb Arbab escorted him, and from the visible anger and hostility the people displayed, it was clear that our decision to provide Bhutto an army escort was a good one.

Mujib had refused direct conversation and discussion with Bhutto. Though the three—Yahya, Mujib, and Bhutto—met under one roof, the conversation between Mujib and Bhutto was conducted through Yahya. Such was the hostility of East Pakistanis towards Bhutto. They had branded him 'Killer No. 1' after the postponement of the NA session and the resultant riots and killings.

Bhutto objected to the agreement; he termed it a 'massive betrayal of West Pakistan'. He proposed that the National Assembly session be called to approve the agreement or that he be allowed to have further discussions with Mujib. But Awami League leaders adamantly opposed further protracted negotiations and were pressuring Mujib to declare independence.

The law and order situation deteriorated even further during this period. The armed forces had become the targets of verbal and physical attacks and the people were trying to keep them confined to their barracks. Even the supply of fresh vegetables, fruit, poultry, and other commodities were stopped. Vendors were not allowed to come to the cantonment area. Army contractors and shopkeepers were harassed and told not to sell anything to army personnel. Daily food items, such as potatoes and onions, had to be flown out of West Pakistan as local contractors and shopkeepers refused to supply fresh rations. The cruel joke was that the C-130s bringing in rations were painted by the local and foreign media as troop-carriers bringing reinforcements from West Pakistan.

The non-locals of Dacca, Khulna, Chittagong, Dinajpur, Saidpur, Rangpur, and other areas were similarly harassed and subjected to inhumane treatment. These unfortunate people were in a state of panic. In Dacca and Chittagong, the Awami League hoodlums were on a rampage. They would enter houses of non-locals and do whatever they wanted with the residents and their property. Those who tried to escape to West Pakistan by air or sea were deprived of their valuables. On 19 March, a mob used a roadblock to stop Brigade Commander Arbab who was on

his way back to Dacca from Joydebpur (he was visiting a battalion of the East Bengal Regiment there). His escort, which attempted to clear the road, was fired upon. In a similar incident at Rangpur, an army Dodge carrying five army personnel, including an officer, was mobbed. The officer exercising restraint, tried to talk his way out of the situation but the mob beat him up and stabbed him. The officer succumbed to his injuries in the hospital. The mob also took away four stun guns. All of this was happening while the president was still in East Pakistan, vying for a political solution.

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Reports were pouring in from various places about the influx of Indian arms and ammunition, as well as the training of Awami League volunteers by ex-servicemen and other officers who were seconded to the civil government. Colonel Osmani was busy organizing a paramilitary force to take on the regular troops. The people continued to cause problems for the army in their normal work routine. It appeared that the extremists wanted a showdown with the army. Dacca University campus had become a base for such activity, and stored huge amounts of arms, ammunition, and vehicles. It was also being used as a training camp.

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March 23 was the zenith of Mujib's movement; it was a historic day. Pakistan celebrated it as Republic Day. Mujib celebrated it as Lahore Resolution Day. It was a decisive day when Mujib hoisted the Bangladesh flag at his house,

declaring independence. Pakistan's flag could only be seen within the confines of the cantonments in East Pakistan. Mujib, standing on the balcony of his house in Dhanmandi, waved the Bangladesh flag in front of thousands of followers who were raising slogans of support.

On 23 March, Mujib came to the President House with the Bangladesh flag flying on his car. The Awami League delegation presented their final proposals. Secretary General of the Awami League Tajuddin Ahmed gave 48 hours' notice for accepting their demands, which he termed final, adding that they were not going to hold any more talks.

The content of their demands remain unknown except that they were unacceptable to the West Pakistani leadership of Yahya and Bhutto. Other West Pakistani leaders, fearing catastrophe and bloodshed, started leaving Dacca. All hopes of a political settlement had vanished.

Hence, acceptance of Awami League demands or military action were the only choices left. Compromise had become impossible at this stage. The Awami League had achieved absolute majority, and wanted to implement the Six Points programme through this system. After the acceptance of one-man-one-vote provisions, the interest of East Pakistanis in united Pakistan had increased. They finally saw the possibility of ruling over the whole country. Mujib wanted to become prime minister of Pakistan.

Some of their prominent, extremist leaders were demanding independence as Bangladesh; they were kept in check till the National Assembly session was postponed. From then on, the extremists under Tajuddin directed the policies of the party. They were also able to convince Mujib

that the West Pakistanis would never hand over power to him through constitutional means. He came to the conclusion that the combined power of the army and the PPP would disturb his ambition to be the Prime Minister of Pakistan, so he decided to become the 'father' of a new nation.

The PPP, which had achieved success in Punjab and Sindh, was claiming to represent the views of West Pakistan. In the name of protecting the interests of West Pakistan, Bhutto confronted the ML authorities with the possibility of agitation from Khyber to Karachi. As he was a popular leader and his charismatic personality had impressed a number of senior officers of the Pakistan Army, President Yahya could not hand over power to the majority leader without Bhutto's agreement.

The president seemed caught between two extreme situations. As the majority of the Armed Forces came from West Pakistan, to save his own position, he decided to support the political leadership of West Pakistan. He ordered the armed forces of Pakistan to re-establish the writ of the government. Even a civilian head of state faced with a similar situation may have done the same. Mrs Gandhi did exactly the same in East Punjab. The Chinese did it in Peking. A politician would have perhaps sought better and more subtle methods to make the two political leaders arrive at an understanding and a compromise.

The two top leaders were hell-bent on gaining power for themselves, restricting space for the president to manoeuvre. Unfortunately, he himself was a General, representing the army, and as a matter of policy, he should have treated both the leaders equally. The Pakistan Army

was not the West Pakistan Army; it should not have taken sides. Both Mujib and Bhutto should have been made to realize that they had to come to terms with each other. East Pakistan's reaction would have been different if Bhutto had been dissuaded from issuing a threat to chop off the legs of those who tried to go to Dacca. The National Assembly session should have been held and, if the Awami League had tried to bulldoze a non-acceptable constitution, the president could act as custodian of the interests of Pakistan as a whole. With the president favouring the PPP, the East Pakistani leadership's suspicions gained credibility. They lost faith not only in the West Pakistan leadership but also in the Pakistan leadership.

Taking military action was a political decision. Bhutto approved of it and exclaimed: 'Pakistan has been saved!' In reality, because of the decision to take military action, Pakistan had been undone. Though it took another nine months to take shape, the breakup of the country was the direct, inevitable, and a natural consequence of two major political decisions: first, to postpone the National Assembly session and second, to launch military action.

# 7

# The Military Action

TILL 2 MARCH 1971, THE ARMY HAD NO IDEA WHAT WAS happening at the President House. Maj. Gen. Khadim Hussain Raja was GOC of the only division, i.e. 14 Division, in East Pakistan.

I was major general for civil affairs, but had no work to do as there was no governor and the Awami League was running the administration. Brigadier Ghulam Jilani Khan, who later became governor of Punjab, was brigadier, martial law. Martial law had also failed to impose its will and Jilani, too, was practically without a job.

All three of us spent most of our time discussing the situation amongst ourselves and with those who had descended upon us from the GHQ. We were dubbed 'doves' by the hawks of West Pakistan.[18] We felt that the election results should be accepted; Mujib had secured a majority in the National Assembly and therefore should be allowed to form a government. We firmly believed that the Pakistan Army should not be made to look like a West Pakistani Army and a supporter of only West Pakistani leaders and their interests. The problem, we felt, was a political one and should be resolved through political means alone.

It was disappointing to note, however, that both Mujib and Bhutto were more interested in acquiring power for

themselves. It was a struggle for power, and the interests of the country meant nothing to them.

Since we were optimistic that good sense would prevail, the army had made no serious preparations to deal with the eventuality of failure of the talks. This optimism prevailed till 20 March, before Bhutto arrived in Dacca. By the 21st, rumours were floating that the talks were headed towards failure. This became apparent from how the West Pakistani leaders behaved; their exodus had begun. We became worried, and Khadim and I met General Tikka on 22 March with a request to get precise information from the President House. General Tikka quite nonchalantly said, 'Oh, they will let us know if we need to know.' However, as we got no news during the day, we approached him again in the evening and repeated our request. He agreed to visit the President House for a briefing.

Early on the morning of 23 March, he said, '*Oh kuch ho raha hai, tayari mayari karo*' (something is likely to happen, prepare yourself). This was the only instruction given by the corps commander to GOC 14 Division.[19]

Khadim invited me to his divisional headquarters where we sat down to write operational instructions to various elements of the armed forces located in East Pakistan.[20] We were faced with the possibility of revolt by the East Pakistan Rifles as well as the East Pakistan Regiment. The Joydebpur incident provided an indication of where their loyalties lay. While preparing our operational plan, we had to think of answers to the following problems:

a. In the event of a revolt, the resources available would only be ten depleted battalions plus artillery,

engineers, and signal units, making a maximum of 10,000 West Pakistani troops who could be opposed by four regular army battalions of the East Pakistan Regiment and the whole of the Regimental Centre supported by the Border Security Force (BSF) (approximately 12,000 East Pakistan Rifles personnel and 100,000 Mujahideen). During the period of Awami League control over the administration, rifles in police custody had been issued to the Mujahideen. The proportion of combative units not in our favour added to our woes, and our troops being scattered all over East Pakistan made the situation worse.

b. From 7–24 March, the Awami League was in control of all organs of the state. Meetings of regular army officers and ex-service officers of East Pakistan origins had taken place. Preparations had been made to take over Tejgaon airport and the cantonment area so as to force the surrender of West Pakistani elements. East Pakistanis had a majority in the PAF and could easily take over the airport. 2 EBR was located at Joydebpur, hardly ten miles from the cantonment. In case of an operation, the entire lot of three units in the cantonment was supposed to take part, exposing the cantonment to attack by 2 EBR or by the mob. We had earlier uncovered a plan by the Awami League to bring in a whole trainload of armed rioters and halt it in the middle of the cantonment through which the line passed. All residential houses could thus be exposed to an attack by these rioters with frightening consequences.

c. There was not enough time to properly brief the

commanders in various sectors; therefore, senior officers had to fly out to brigade headquarters to personally brief the troops about their tasks and missions. Our greatest worry, however, was the existence of thinly dispersed JCOs and NCOs in the EP Rifles. Divisional HQ tried to pull them in to Dacca but the distances were too great; in the events that followed, most of them were killed.

d. We felt that to avoid bloodshed, it would be wise to arrest all political leaders even if we had to employ a ruse. Our recommendation was to call a meeting of all the leaders and arrest them but that was not accepted by the President House. We, therefore, prepared a list of all the prominent politicians in Dacca and other places and designated parties to go and arrest them as part of the preparation. However, as the plan was leaked due to the president's departure, the political leaders disappeared and without police assistance it was impossible for the West Pakistan Army to identity them. Except for Mujib, no other prominent leader could be arrested. Kamal himself turned up to meet Major General Aboobakar Osman Mitha.

e. We had seen the gradual escalation of agitation during the last couple of years and knew how each new phase could be more violent and better organized. We were, therefore, expecting stiffer and perhaps armed resistance against the armed forces' action, especially as it was coming after virtual rule by the Awami League. The army wanted to avoid a bloodbath. The strategy planned and finally adopted was of a show of force and greater display of fire

power than its actual employment. It was decided to mount light machine guns on jeeps with their barrels pointed towards the sky, firing tracer-mixed bullets to keep the people away from the streets. The guns were also fitted with rocket launchers to demolish walls erected to block the streets. It was to be ensured that fear was generated without causing human casualties to keep the agitators and rebels confined to their homes.

Unfortunately, the display of firepower was distorted by the foreign press and a casualty-saving plan was portrayed as an action of mass massacre. There were casualties in the streets of Dacca. The casualties that occurred were predominantly during the firefights in the university area with armed students and rebels, and in the police lines, where the police fired at the troops. The university had the greatest concentration of armed personnel, fully trained and ready to resist the army. The police had revolted at about 10 p.m. and were the first to open fire at the army which was moving on the road and passing by the police lines.

f. As time was short, the civilian administrators from West Pakistan posted in outlying districts could not be informed and some of them lost their lives. I picked up two young officers during my visit to Khulna and brought them to Dacca.[21]

g. Some local commanders exceeded the limits of reasonable response, especially in the case of action against the *People's Daily*—a newspaper which too had exceeded all norms of decency in its criticism of the army.

The preparation for military action, therefore, was not thorough. The talks failed on 23 March. There was not enough time for as complex an operation as was envisaged, and West Pakistani personnel, who were spread all over East Pakistan, could not be informed because of short notice and maintaining secrecy.

Khadim Hussain developed an outline and I wrote the general concept for executing the plan. We presented it the same afternoon in the officers' mess of 14 Division to General Hamid, COS Army. Gen. Tikka was also present. They approved the plan, except for two vital points.

Our recommendations to disarm the EPR and EBR were not approved. Gen. Hamid along Churchillian lines said, 'I cannot preside over the disintegration of the Pakistan Army.' Had he accepted our recommendation, the serious military opposition that developed when the EPR and EBR revolted would have been avoided as would much of the bloodshed. However, in Dacca with the participation of the EPR commander, the troops in Peel Khana were disarmed, making it easier to restore peace there.

We had also recommended that the president stay on in Dacca, but were told that he had to brief the foreign ambassadors and generally retain contact with the outside world for the sake of greater interests of the country. He was not going to stay on in Dacca, and we were debarred from taking any action till his aircraft got to within forty miles of Karachi.

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Khadim and I were under great stress, torn between the decided military action, and the call of duty due to the

ingrained army discipline inculcated in us. We had been trained to openly voice our opinions but knew to obey the orders once they were issued. The army's and the West Pakistanis' reaction to Gen. Yaqub's resignation was also etched in our memories: he had been dubbed 'yellow' by all and sundry and anybody who says differently now is lying. Had his action been appreciated, we too would have resigned. In any case, those who criticized us after the debacle should know that at the time of crisis, one's duty to one's country comes first.

Knowing that we had opposed the idea of military action, two generals, Iftikhar Janjua and Mitha, were flown to Dacca to take over from us if we wavered or showed the slightest weakness. Major General Mitha was later made deputy to General Tikka as the high command in West Pakistan had more confidence in him. Also present in Dacca at that time were Maj. Gen. Omar and Maj. Gen. Khuda Dad. They were all full of fire, ridiculing us for our 'soft' attitude towards the Awami League. We told them that we were not afraid for our lives—what we were worried about was Pakistan.

The effort to goad us to accept military action reached extreme absurdity when Gen. Hamid decided to call on us at our home with a special request to meet our wives (we were living together at Khadim's house, as I had vacated my residence in the Governor House). During his chat with our wives, Gen. Hamid indirectly asked them to convince us to support the idea of military action. We were also present when he had this chat and told him that we would obey orders and execute them but that we still thought it disastrous for Pakistan. As good soldiers, we

had to obey the decision of the president and commander-in-chief of the army and we told Hamid so. Our decision was based on the traditions of disciplined armies.

A parallel to our situation occurred later in history when the Indian troops attacked the Golden Temple in Amritsar in June 1984. During this army action, the majority of senior commanders were Sikh. Despite their religious reservations, they executed the orders of the government.

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No date was set for the military operation. We were however told that time was short and senior army officers were to convey orders through personal visits. Chittagong was the most critical area with the entire army personnel comprised of Bengali troops. The Regimental Centre was commanded by Brigadier Mujarndar, a Bengali. General Khadim decided to go there himself. I was sent to Khulna to brief the commander of the Jessore Brigade. Brigadier Ali El-Edroos, COS Corps, and Col. Saadullah, Colonel GS Corps, went out to brief troops in Sylhet and Rangpur/Bogra. A codeword was given to set the date of the operation.

Under my supervision, Brigadier Arbab was to command the brigade in Dacca. He knew the city thoroughly but had his battalion commanders (dressed as civilians) conduct additional reconnaissance. He also had the houses of prominent political leaders marked.

The impending operation was not like a regular army operation in support of the civil government where curfew is imposed to curb serious rioting and to bring

the situation under control. Here, the conditions were entirely different. After 7 March, the Awami League was running the government. 90 per cent of the people had been stupefied by Mujib's magic, ready to lay down their lives for Bangladesh. They were armed and trained. The writ of the government had to be restored by use of force. A rebellion had taken place which needed to be put down.

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We waited for the order. On 25 March, Khadim and I came to know that the president was going to visit the corps commander. Except for the two of us, all senior officers—Hamid, Mitha, Iftikhar, Khuda Dad, and Omar were present in General Tikka's house. Both of us were suspect. We were told at about 6 p.m. that the operation was to be launched that night but not before 1 a.m. as the president was flying out and no action was to be taken before he was in Karachi's reception zone.

Orders were issued by sending out the codeword and the time. Troops started moving after sunset but were not allowed to enter the city. The president's move was kept a secret. He drove to the airport in a small car unescorted to maintain secrecy. But little did they know that Wing Commander A. K. Khondkar of the PAF standing on the tarmac to wave him off promptly went to inform Mujib.

While the President's aircraft was taking off for Karachi, Mujib was meeting his senior colleagues. We asked for permission to move and arrest all the senior leaders in the meeting. This action would have killed the movement before it developed full force. There would have been no bloodshed. But we were not allowed, for the sake of

the president's security. The fear was that Indian aircraft would intercept the president's flight.

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The people noticed the feverish activity in Dacca and began erecting a series of roadblocks and barricades. Big trees were felled to block the roads, which were dug and filled with coal tar, to be set on fire to stop vehicular movement. They were preparing to deny entry to the army. Reports came pouring in that the Awami League might launch an operation of their own to capture Dacca Airport, and the situation could swerve out of control. Therefore, orders were issued to implement the instructions outlined earlier. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested from his residence at 1:30 a.m. by a platoon of the Special Services Group (SSG). Telephone exchanges were switched off at 2 a.m.; the EPR at Peelkhana was disarmed at 2:30 a.m., half an hour later; and the reserve police were disarmed by 3 a.m.

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By 5 a.m., the university campus area was secure. The residents of Iqbal, Liaquat, and Jagan Nath halls resisted, with the last being the toughest to tackle.[23] The houses of all prominent Awami League leaders were raided, but none could be found. Ex Lt Comd Moazzem Hossain (of Agartala Conspiracy fame) was, however, killed when he tried to fire and resist. With the main pockets of resistance falling by the morning of 26 March, Dacca was brought under control without further difficulty. Narayanganj, however, proved to be a stronghold of ex-servicemen who had presumably slipped away from Dacca. They had

organized a strong defence in connivance with the local civil population. Their strength was such that a battalion move supported by tanks was repulsed when they tried to enter the area.

University premises had remained out-of-bounds even for the police in the name of 'sanctity of educational institutions'. It was a safe haven for subversive activities. After 7 March, students' halls had been turned into guerrilla training camps, where obstacle courses, barbed-wire entanglements, and other training aids had been developed. Students and volunteers trained as one. Jagannath Hall which housed Hindu students, was the most notorious for anti-Pakistan activities.

Some people accuse the army of killing mere students. One must ask this: when does a student cease to be a student? The answer is that a student ceases to be a student when he carries arms; all those who were killed were carrying arms, had refused to stop firing, or accept offers of surrender

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The situation in other parts of the province was not good. Everybody was making exaggerated claims of success and of return to normalcy. I painted the true picture in a signal message to the CMLA HQ. The message dated 28 March said, 'The army is in complete control of Dacca airport, cantonments of Comilla, Sylhet, Rangpur, Saidpur, Khulna, and Jessore. They are all isolated. No road communication exists between them. Chittagong under rebel control.'

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Every Bengali unit had revolted. Major Ziaur Rahman had killed his commanding officer Colonel Janjua and declared independence for Bangladesh with himself as its first president. They took over the city. With sheer determination and great valour, West Pakistanis defended the airport and the naval headquarters area. The 4th East Bengal Regiment put their commanding officer under arrest and captured Ashuganj, Brahmanbaria, and Akhaura i.e. the areas between Comilla and Sylhet.

The 2nd East Bengal regiment moved out of Joydebpur after killing West Pakistani soldiers and their families. Luckily, they did not move against Dacca Cantonment where there were no regular troops. They captured Tangail and Mymensingh. Bogra, and the area south of it was captured by rebel civilians, as was Pabna. Only the camp area in Rajshahi remained with West Pakistani troops. A whole battalion was decimated between Khulna, Kushtia, and Pabna, suffering very heavy casualties.

Soldiers who fell into rebel hands were subjected to terrible atrocities. The foreign press also photographed rebels carrying severed heads of the soldiers on spears. Except for the cantonment of Jessore, the entire area had fallen into the hands of the rebels supported by 1 East Bengal Regiment. Khulna was under army control but there was no road link between Jessore and Khulna. Patuakhali, Noakhali, and Faridpur were completely under rebel control.[24]

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The situation on 28 March was so serious that if reinforcements did not come from West Pakistan, the

various isolated detachments could be decimated. The Indians had not remained silent spectators either. They actively supported rebels in border areas from Jessore to Rajshahi. The situation was very precarious at Rajshahi. Before the relief column arrived, the defensive ring around them was only eight hundred yards in diameter. Rebels, armed with mortars, had made their lives beyond miserable. The battalion in Sylhet had to vacate the town and take up positions around the airport to maintain some link with Dacca.

Since Chittagong had been considered a critical area, a battalion from Comilla was ordered to move there on the eve of 26 March under Brigadier Iqbal Shaffi. The column met with severe resistance all along, suffering considerable casualties, including their commanding officer. They could not reach the city till troops from Chittagong contacted them. A battalion had landed in Dacca the morning after the military action was launched. It was flown out immediately to Chittagong, where they acted as saviours.

From 31 March to 7 April, the PIA carried out a daring operation that equalled the heroics of the Berlin Airlift. It ferried across, over Sri Lanka, two infantry divisions which were immediately sent to various sectors.

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By 10 May, the whole of East Pakistan was under army control but the operation had left irreparable scars. Atrocities had been committed by both sides. It is a phenomenon of civil war that it is crueller than an organized war. In war, there are rules of conduct governed by the Geneva Convention and a code of chivalry. In a civil

war, there are no rules and men behave like wild animals. Both sides acted and reacted horribly.

I can cite the example of Bengali brutalities where a whole village of Biharis was wiped out. In Brahmanbaria, three hundred dead bodies of women were found, with a child's head nailed to the wall; the male members of the area had been butchered earlier. In Mymensingh, Bihari children were forced to dig graves for their fathers. In Chittagong, all senior members of the East Pakistan Railways had been murdered in a slaughterhouse especially contrived for the brutal act. In Dinajpur, a West Pakistani captain who was married to a Bengali girl was murdered by his own father-in-law, after which a procession was organized to celebrate and publicise this. In Bogra, a mob overcame a small army detachment of six to seven men and murdered the major in charge. He was then decapitated and his head was kicked around in front of his wife. The IB DG's son-in-law, who was posted as assistant commissioner at Tangail, was killed and his body was dragged around town. All seven hundred or so West Pakistani NCOs serving with EPR were killed, as were the isolated families of army personnel.

At the same time, elements of the Pakistan army failed to behave as a national army. Overcome at witnessing the mutilated bodies of their fellow soldiers, some exceeded their authority and extra-judicially killed a number of civil and police officials. The army too was unable to control the Biharis out for revenge, especially in areas where extreme Bengali elements had subjected them to grave atrocities.[25]

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We had expected India to interfere and that was the main reason why Ayub Ahsan and I had opposed the military option. It appears that the Indian high commissioner in Dacca had promised direct military support to Awami League leaders. Our troops also came across some elements of the Indian Borders Security Force in Benapole, and some Gurkhas in the Sylhet area. India's major emphasis however, was on psychological warfare. They launched a massive campaign to incite the people of East Pakistan by broadcasting exaggerated accounts of violence by the Pakistan Army. They openly invited East Pakistanis from the Hindu community to migrate to India. Their army personnel, disguised as Pakistan army personnel, instilled fear in the border areas with indiscriminate firing, mostly at night.

The Indian preparation was thorough. They had established camps prior to the military action to receive refugees. Hindus had started migrating much earlier because of the West Bengal government's offer of land allotment. As a matter of routine, to ease the hardships of Hindus, the Pakistani government had previously waived restrictions on land they sold (it had been imposed to discourage migration in the early 1950s). The government record would show that Hindus had sold property worth eighty crores or more between 1968 and 1969. They had sent all this money to India and later migrated. By its very nature, the operation facilitated migration. The Hindu exodus fanned outwards from Dacca—the only airport where troops from West Pakistan could land.

A large number of people, some out of fear created by stories of atrocities against the Bengalis and others out of

apprehension about punishment for atrocities they had committed against Biharis and West Pakistanis, fled to India before the advancing Pakistan Army. As the East Pakistan Rifles had revolted, the borders were porous and the outwards migration could not be stopped.

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From 25 March to 10 May, the rebels controlled most of East Pakistan's territory. During this period, they had set up administrations at the district level and committed atrocities against Biharis and pro-Pakistan Bengalis. Pakistan Army control was confined to cantonment areas. The whole length of the railway line was under rebel control. The ex-regular army units of Bengali origin had rebelled too. There was a time when even Indian troops could have travelled across East Pakistan from Calcutta to Agartala by rail without our even knowing it.

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Two divisions were flown out from West Pakistan after military action. As they were sent by air, they had to leave heavy weapons behind and, therefore, could perform policing duties only. Had they been in place before the action, the rebellion might have been contained.

# 8

# Indian Machinations

THE REBELS RESISTED STRONGLY. WITH REINFORCEMENTS FLOWN in after 26 March 1971, however, the Pakistan Army was able to wrestle back the entire East Pakistan territory from rebels by 10 May 1971. Winning the people's hearts and minds, though, was another story—sustained political efforts were the only way to do that.

The main problem was Indian interference; they were looking for an excuse to undo Pakistan. Their strategists saw the opportunity of the century to cut Pakistan 'down to size'. Indians considered the infighting among Pakistanis an advantage. Muslim history was being repeated. Practically all Muslim countries and governments had succumbed to hostile rule at one time or another because of internal strife and disharmony.

The Indian government welcomed those Hindus who migrated to India. East Pakistan Armed Forces personnel were kept in their original units. Camps were opened all around East Pakistan where volunteers were trained in guerrilla warfare. They consisted mostly of Hindus but among them were some Muslim students too. All of them continued to be a part of Mukti Bahini and Col. Osmani was promoted to the rank of general and put in command of this barbaric force. Indian training institutions were opened to Bengali cadres. In short, India violated all

norms of neighbourly conduct and internationally acceptable behaviour.

After reorganizing and training their volunteers on the Indian side, the Mukti Bahini guerrillas were sent into East Pakistan territory. With the population turned hostile towards the Pakistan Army, the guerrillas were well received. They were provided protection, food, and shelter. The people's hostility was partly due to the military action, but mostly due to virulent propaganda against the army. When a military acts to suppress rebellion, there are bound to be casualties. They capitalized on Bengali nationalism and the subsequent, inevitable backlash. It also provided an excuse for Indian intervention under what was termed the pressure of refugees. Most of the Awami League leaders had fled to India, forming a government-in-exile.

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By 23 March, military action had become inevitable because negotiations had failed. Military action by itself is never an end, but a means to one. One goes to war when negotiations fail only to enable return to the negotiating table. Sometimes, the government has to use a firm hand to convince the opponents that they cannot have everything their way, but the action should not culminate in the elimination of the opposition forces. The point of contention has to be addressed; if it is not, the thorn will remain and surface later. In the case of East Pakistan, we had to find an answer to the Awami League's demands.

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There is not the slightest doubt that the Awami League had exceeded the normal limits of agitation. They had taken over the government. They had revolted. But their support lay with the people. Simultaneous to military action, a political move was necessary to allay their fears. I wrote a proposal to be included in the president's speech in which I suggested that the president say Mujib was not being arrested; he was merely being taken into protective custody to save him from the clutches of the extremists. I also suggested that the president spell out the future political and constitutional arrangements with regards to provincial autonomy for East Pakistan.[26] I was sure that once Mujib was in custody, he would be more amenable to meaningful negotiations. A promise of greater autonomy would pacify the agitators to some extent. Unfortunately, a hacked military operation was launched instead, since the army commanders believed in force alone.

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After a few days of military action, we found that all of the East Bengal Regiments had revolted but were still inside Pakistani territory. It would be advantageous if we could somehow convince them to stay. In an operational meeting presided over by Lt General Niazi, who had replaced Gen. Tikka as corps commander, I suggested that amnesty be announced for all those who wished to return under Pakistan command. One of the generals laughed out loud and said, 'Oh, we have heard about your political views [before].'[27] They had already made up their minds, it seemed.

I was shocked to hear what Niazi had to say in the same meeting. He said, 'What do I hear about shortage of rations? We are at war. We are in enemy territory. In Burma, we lived off the land. We got what we wanted from the people. You get it from the people.' It was horrifying to hear Pakistanis being referred to as 'enemies'.

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Despite not being in favour of military action, I performed my duty to the best of my abilities. After two days of military duty, I took over civil affairs again. I contacted all the political leaders in Dacca—Nurul Amin, Khawaja Khairuddin, Maulvi Farid Ahmed, Shafiqul Islam, Professor Ghulam Azam and others, and requested them to come to the MLA headquarters. They met Gen. Tikka, agreed to issue a press statement, and to form peace committees. They were truly loyal Pakistanis.

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In 1971, Indian propaganda was very effective. They were able to paint Pakistan as a villain and themselves as champions of the cause of the downtrodden. Pakistan gets bad press because instead of exhibiting unity and unanimity in foreign affairs, our people tend to criticize every action of the government. Secondly, the foreign press is anti-Pakistan because Pakistan does not recognize Israel, which obviously antagonizes the Jewish community that dominates the world press. India, on the other hand, has a relationship of mutual support and Indian journalists occupy important positions at many of the English newspapers in the UK.

To counter the effects of propaganda, pro-Pakistan leaders belonging to the Muslim League, PDP, Jamaat-i-Islami and other Islam-*pasand* parties, organized peace committees throughout the country with Khawaja Khairuddin as the chairman.

The peace committees did a wonderful job in the early stages. They led a massive procession in support of Pakistan in Dacca, on or around, 7 April. Similar efforts were made to reactivate pro-Pakistan elements throughout the country. We wanted to win the people over. Even some of the army officers did their best to mobilize support for Pakistan by treating Bengalis as brothers. The most prominent name that comes to mind was of Brig. (later Maj. Gen.) Abdullah. He managed to completely harmonize Rangpur. The army should have done the same in Dacca, but here we had Niazi holding the charge, and he wanted to change the racial structure of East Pakistan. While meeting Gen. Hamid and the president, I clearly told them about the corps commander's unbecoming behaviour; nothing was done to rectify it.

Unfortunately, our reconciliation efforts faced a severe setback from an unexpected quarter. The reinforcement troops inducted into East Pakistan included members of the Civil Armed Forces (CAF). They were brave fighters but, being uneducated, were more prone to psychological and religious propaganda. Before they came to Dacca, somebody must have told them that the Bengalis had revolted against the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. For some, the Bengalis must have been painted as *Kafirs*. The CAF personnel did not behave well, embarrassing the administration and jeopardizing the wound-healing

efforts of the peace committees. They were, therefore, moved out of the cities and performed well in operations.

A new force of *razakars* was raised to protect the population. They did a magnificent job, by and large. After a civilian governor was inducted, the policy of reconciliation began. Some Mukti Bahini elements, however, infiltrated the *razakars* and caused defections. Some perhaps did turn as well. At critical moments, they rebelled and took over various police stations, thereby weakening the Pakistan Army's position.

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I had my work cut out for myself in the civil administration. There was a lot to rehabilitate. There was confusion all over. No government existed as such since the provincial government had been acting under the Awami League's orders. Fresh orders were to be issued to all government servants to attend their offices. Schools and colleges had to be reopened. Teachers and professors were reassured that there would be no action against them for their past activities. Radio and television had been most active in anti-Pakistan propaganda; they were rehabilitated without major overhaul. New heads were appointed and policy directions were given. Roads had to be repaired. Ferries had been dislocated causing great discomfort to the public; these were put into operation again. Dacca city and certain areas in the interior were about to run short of food which was lying imported at Chittagong; arrangements had to be made for its transportation. The police were non-existent; they had to be reassembled and reassured since their morale was badly shaken.

East Pakistan was in turmoil. Reinforcements for civil administrators, the police, and radio and TV personnel arrived from West Pakistan. They were all new to the environment. Their induction too was a clear indication of zero confidence in the East Pakistani government servants. At the same time, there was no other option. It was a terrible and frustrating situation. I knew Shafiul Azam as chief secretary. He was a very efficient and capable civil administrator. He was pro-Bengali, but a patriotic Pakistani. I was sorry when he was replaced.

My heart bled as I heard stories from West Pakistanis, Biharis, and Bengalis. To me, all of them were Pakistanis suffering at the hands of one another for being different. Here are some events that I heard in a single day:

I met the Comilla DC's wife in my office. Her husband had been killed by West Pakistanis. She was accompanied by her brother, who was married to a West Pakistani girl. Bengalis had butchered that girl's male relatives in Chittagong. The same day, a number of wailing women from Mymensingh arrived with unbelievable stories of Bengali atrocities against Biharis. They had lost all of the male members of their families prior to the army action.

The Tangail DC came trembling, with hands folded and clothes torn. He had helped the mob who had eventually killed a West Pakistani AC. One could do nothing except forget and forgive with the hope that such a gesture would win over support for Pakistan. I reinstated him and sent him back to take over the district administration. He cooperated and carried out his duties to our satisfaction. However, I was not so successful in the case of other civil administrators who were captured by the army.

Niazi adopted a tougher attitude and in his first address declared that the Bengalis were to be treated as 'enemies', an attitude which was abominable, to say the least. When the army arrested DC Faridpur and DC Patuakhali, I requested that they be released. Upon refusal, I asked Gen. Tikka Khan to intervene and issue orders for their release. To my horror, Niazi was acting totally independent of Tikka.

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In reality, even martial law had failed in East Pakistan—this was undisguised military rule. We, in the Governor House were in the final analysis, without power. Niazi had his own prison and concentration camps. People were arrested without reference to the Governor House, the Secretariat or the local civil administrators. This led to much corruption but as we all relied on the army as the ultimate power, we had to accept their overlord-ship.

Gen. Tikka was a good administrator. He would spare neither himself nor others. He was also very demanding. He held daily meetings with civil administrators and did a wonderful job in rehabilitating a completely shattered civil administration. However, the job to win the hearts of the people and of political manoeuvring was beyond him. Niazi was of no help to him either. In fact, his behaviour created more rifts between the different people of Pakistan.

So when General Hamid visited Dacca again in May, I requested that he post me back to West Pakistan. I could not work in an environment that was in conflict with my convictions. Even though he promised, I was posted as major general, political affairs, with a subordinate staff of

only two civilian officers of deputy secretary rank. I had been snubbed for my opposing views. During my meeting with General Hamid, I told him that the Field Intelligence units of the army were illegally detaining and executing people. He promised to put a stop to it and ordered Brig. Janjua to convey his instructions to Niazi.

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After taking over as major general, political affairs, I recommended granting amnesty to all. Tikka agreed and approved a signal to the CMLA HQ recommending the same by the central government. We were delighted to receive approval; it was announced over the radio. However, we were shocked when we received an admonishment directing us to cancel the amnesty order. People lost faith in our credibility. A large number of MNAs, who till then were within East Pakistan, lost all hope of a political solution and crossed over to India to join the rebel government in exile.

Very few political leaders from West Pakistan visited East Pakistan after the military action. Those who visited were Air Marshal Asghar Khan, Maulana Tufail Ahmed, Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan, and General Umrao. The air marshal stayed in Dacca. Maulana Tufail went on an extensive tour of the province, which resulted in the support of *al-Shams* and *al-Badr Mujahids* and the *razakars*. Nawabzada's approach as usual was nationalistic and patriotic. But people belonging to his school of thought were few and become even fewer. General Umrao had vast experience concerning East Pakistan and was well known there. His efforts to arrive at some understanding

were ineffective because he was a general; generals were at the lowest ebb of their popularity in East Pakistan at the time.

We expected President Yahya to visit Dacca soon. Whenever I met him, I requested him to do so. He always promised, but never did.

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In June, I was asked to request Nurul Amin to come to Rawalpindi for a meeting with the president. He visited, though somewhat reluctantly, and Yahya accepted most of his suggestions. Amin became an active supporter of the regime and suggested that Yahya visit Dacca. Yahya made a promise to him as well, but went to Iran instead. In Iran, it may have been possible to negotiate some sort of settlement. The Bengalis in Calcutta were willing but the Indians did not desire a peaceful settlement; they had gotten the rare chance to break up Pakistan. They saw it as an opportunity to defeat Pakistan, offered by the Pakistanis Muslims themselves, and avenge the thousand-year Muslim rule.

The efforts of the Shah of Iran failed. A delegation of the exiled Government of Bangladesh was to go the United Nations. Mushtaq Khondkar was to lead the delegation as foreign minister, but was dropped on the Indian government's orders; he was suspected of being pro-Pakistan. In actual fact, many of the Muslim Bengalis who had gone to Calcutta got disillusioned soon after. They found that East Pakistan had developed much more than West Bengal. Muslims living there told them about events like the Calcutta killings. They realized the

reason for Pakistan's creation when they saw the plight of Muslims in India.

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In July, the president discussed the future course of action with Nurul Amin. All agreed the situation in East Pakistan had stabilized enough to allow room for political action. The president informed us that he had decided to replace Tikka as governor with a civilian. He had Dr Malik's name in mind. Dr Malik was a respected politician of East Pakistan and had been a minister in Ayub's government. Tikka had been a successful commander. While some thought him tough and ruthless—he has even been called a butcher— the real Tikka was a good-hearted gentleman. He was a determined commander and reverses did not upset him. I was sure that if he had been in command, the army in East Pakistan would have given a better account of itself.

Visualizing the difficult days ahead of us, I requested the president to leave Tikka in command of the troops in East Pakistan, and to only relieve him as governor. Civilianization of the administration was required and Tikka was not considered suited to the task of negotiating with political leaders. The British Labour Party delegation of parliamentarians had openly and publicly criticized Tikka's abilities to handle the political situation. A change was necessary, but his retention as commander would have been a wise step.

Niazi had already relieved Tikka earlier. During this short period, he had achieved the reputation of a man with a foul mouth and of doubtful character. What he

actually was, only God or Niazi himself would knew, but his utterances were filthy and his behaviour shameful. I narrated all the stories about Niazi floating around in Dacca to the president. I expressed concern for his security as he was reported to visit houses of ill-reputed women at night without escort.

In guerrilla warfare, women are used by the enemy to entice officers; if the senior-most commander could fall into their trap, they would achieve their aim. The president promised to accept my request. We met again in August. He told me that he had discussed Tikka with Dr Malik, who had been designated as governor, and had conditionally accepted the job. One of the conditions was that Tikka be called back to West Pakistan. Dr Malik thought that it would make his position embarrassing if the former governor remained commander of the troops. His second condition was that general amnesty be announced for all, whether they had crossed over to India or were still in East Pakistan and may have committed criminal acts. This was also agreed upon and announced later.

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It was clear that the much-publicized monsoon offensive of the Mukti Bahini had been contained, but not squashed. It was also clear that army action alone would not solve the problem. It required political negotiations. A dialogue with Mujib and the Awami League leaders was the only answer. But an alternate political approach was adopted instead.

The main subject in the July–August meetings was the course for future political action. The government had

decided that those MNAs and MPAs who had gone to Calcutta and had also committed criminal acts would be disqualified and mini-elections would be held for the vacancies created. After the elections, a session of the National Assembly was to be called. I suggested an alternative course of action for disqualifying members, which in my opinion would be constitutional and a sounder political move.

I suggested convening the National Assembly session and announcing a date. Those who did not attend the session would be disqualified after lapse of the specified period. Nobody could object to such a procedure. However, we were bypassed and the intelligence agencies were ordered to prepare lists of MNAs and MPAs who were to be disqualified. We were told to make preparations for conducting elections when required.

I suggested that the elections be completed in October because from November onwards, it would become possible for India to conduct military operations in East Pakistan (all military studies had revealed that the best season for offensive operations in East Pakistan was November). It felt that we should be ready for military confrontation in November and, if we had a political government by then, it would be difficult for India to decide the issue militarily. The suggestion was accepted and October was selected for the elections.

Unfortunately, the army and the ML HQ in East Pakistan wanted to raise an additional force of *razakars* to provide necessary protection during the elections, for which they needed time. Without reference to the governor or to me, the date was changed to November.

The Indians did not want us to be become politically stable. As soon as they came to know that we were going to hold by-elections, they asked the Mukti Bahini to intensify their guerrilla and regular warfare activities. Earlier, the Indians had decided to solve the problem of East Pakistan militarily. Indira Gandhi had clearly and in unmistakable words revealed her intentions. In August, Gen. Manekshaw had issued operation orders. Troops had been moved to their concentration areas. The Indian Army was ready to exploit the weaknesses and difficulties of her smaller neighbour. The Mukti Bahini was to dance to the tune of the Indians. But the Indians saw the Mukti Bahini as eventual enemies. They visualized the situation after the occupation of East Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh. A well-organized and well-trained Bangladesh force would resist Indian occupation. They would refuse to obey Indian domination. Therefore, they opted to weaken and dissipate them by using the Pakistan Army. The goal was to kill two birds with one stone; both the birds were Muslim.

The Mukti Bahini was launched along the border and within the country in short offensive operations. Their attacks achieved results the Indians desired: a diminished Mukti Bahini, an exhausted Pakistan Army, and bases within Pakistan.

A large number of the Mukti Bahini were killed as they had very little support. The Pakistan Army was drawn further outwards and was exhausted by constantly counterattacking the Mukti Bahini. By the time the Indian Army attacked, the Pakistan Army was exhausted due to a lack of relief and reserve troops. The Indian Army

acquired bases inside Pakistan for operations even before the final assault on East Pakistan, without the loss of any notable figures. They acquired those bases by infiltrating East Pakistan territory alongside the Mukti Bahini.

# 9

# Fuss Over Mini Elections

EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PPP LED TO THE DECISION to hold mini-elections by disqualifying MNAs from East Pakistan. The president and Bhutto were continually reported to be holding five to six-hour-long meetings. By and large, these were drinking sessions, but the public was deceived.

It was in such meetings that they decided to hold elections in East Pakistan in a way that would enable the PPP to emerge as a majority party when the National Assembly met next. The plan was to hold by-elections in two phases. In Phase I, elections would be held for seats which were to be declared vacant by disqualifying MNAs who had committed atrocities or heinous crimes during the Awami League's short-lived rule. They totalled to almost eighty. In Phase II, the seats vacated by defaulting members unwilling to attend the session were to be filled in. In Islamabad, it was assumed that due to the prevailing conditions, a large number of MNAs would not attend the National Assembly session when summoned, which would give the PPP a majority in the initial stages.

Most of the MNAs had gone to Calcutta. Only seventy or so out of a total of one hundred and sixty Awami League MNAs stayed behind. According to the procedure outlined by the president, most of those who had left for India

would be disqualified. The intelligence services gave us a list and the election commissioner declared seventy-eight seats vacant.

My reading was that if it participated, the Awami League would win again. It would still not be catastrophic in any way as the individuals thus winning would be the ones living in East Pakistan. However, the Awami League decided to boycott the elections. The other parties left in the field were the Jamaat-i-Islami, PDP, three factions of the Muslim League, and Nizam-i-Islam. All these parties had a limited following. The extent of their popularity was quite evident from the results of the 1970 general elections.

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Meanwhile, the Mukti Bahini, supported by the Indian Army, had launched their offensive at the borders as well as within East Pakistan. The law and order situation therefore deteriorated rapidly and it became impossible to hold elections anywhere, except for major cities. Resultantly, we agreed to the suggestion put forward by the leaders of various parties that seats be divided amongst them. Since no agreement could be worked out by the parties themselves, I suggested that the seats be allotted according to the ratio they had during the last general elections.

There was a snag, however. Nurul Amin was to be the next prime minister of Pakistan. His party, therefore, had to be given weightage. All other leaders in East Pakistan agreed to this arrangement, but though Nurul Amin had won his seat in the general elections, his party had not done so well in other constituencies.

There were sixty-two Awami League members whom I had contacted through the good offices of East Pakistani leaders, particularly Suhrawardy's daughter, Akhtar Sulaiman. They agreed to attend the National Assembly session and support Nurul Amin. Out of the available seats, the PDP was given a majority though Jamaat-i-Islami had polled the second highest number of popular votes.

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While we were struggling with conflicts of interest in East Pakistan, the PPP was actively planning a strategy for when Yahya would exit. If Nurul Amin became prime minister, their entire exercise of the past one year would have gone to waste. They wanted power.

I was called to Rawalpindi. The president told me to give twenty-four seats to the PPP from East Pakistan. This was out of the blue and I was shocked. I informed the president that the PPP did not even have an office in East Pakistan. The PPP had totally ignored East Pakistan during the 1970 elections and did not have a single candidate there. I also told the president that if the next prime minister did not come from East Pakistan, he might as well write off that wing; they would go their own way.

I said that although the pro-Pakistan leaders of East Pakistan were cooperative, they were driven by the dictates of their conscience and principles of their own. They could be persuaded to agree to our suggestions but we could not force them to concede to unreasonable demands. Furthermore, East Pakistanis were well-known for their democratic outlook and legacy. They were willing to take

part in the elections but would not agree to selection. On the president's suggestion, I promised to talk to the East Pakistan leaders, especially Nurul Amin.

Upon my return to Dacca, I posed this problem to Khawaja Khairuddin, Mahmud Ali, Sabur Khan, Fazlul Qadir Chaudhry, and Professor Ghulam Azam, who attended scheduled meetings related to political matters. They reluctantly agreed to surrender twelve seats; six seats in Phase I and six seats in Phase II.

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A delegation of PPP stalwarts had followed me to Dacca. It consisted of Abdul Hafeez Pirzada, Mahmud Ali Kasuri, Kamal Azfar, Khurshid Hassan Mir, and others. They stayed in a hotel and opened an office of the PPP. They did not contact me, and instead met Gen. Niazi, called on the governor, and asked for twenty-four seats as promised by Gen. Yahya. This was to make doubly sure that the PPP would be the majority party in the National Assembly, at least in the initial stages. The PPP's calculation was that once Bhutto became Prime Minister, it would not be difficult for him to maintain that majority by winning over MNAs of other parties.

They interviewed possible candidates but received no worthwhile response. It was out of frustration that one day Kasuri came to my office with Khurshid Hassan Mir. When I asked the purpose of their visit, Kasuri stated their desire for twenty-four seats from East Pakistan. I responded vaguely, and asked which candidates they had in mind. They boasted of a list of around a hundred and fifty people that Pirzada had taken to their chairman, who

would then select candidates for various constituencies. It was a complete bluff because I knew they did not have any worthy candidates, but I promised to help. During our next meeting, I told him of the twelve reluctantly-ceded seats.

Shocked, Hafeez Pirzada carried the message to Bhutto in Karachi, who instantly left for Rawalpindi to see President Yahya. Before going to the president, he walked into Gen. Peerzada's office. When Peerzada also mentioned the same figure, Bhutto flew into a rage, calling it a conspiracy against him and saying that he had been let down and that he and West Pakistan had been betrayed. He went to Yahya, who promised to see if the figure could be improved.

I was ordered to come to Rawalpindi and report to the president. Upon arrival, Peerzada told me about the fuss Bhutto had created. When I went to meet the president in his office, however, I did not find him unduly perturbed. On the contrary, he was apologetic. I reminded him of our earlier conversation and requested that he approve my plan of action.

We could not irk the remaining loyal Pakistanis in East Pakistan. Granted they were in no position to oppose us as they had burned their bridges, it would still be unjust if we arranged a majority for Bhutto in the National Assembly which, unfortunately, happened to be the sole purpose of Bhutto's politics and the aim of his life. Yahya agreed with me, but wanted to keep Bhutto in a good mood and on his side given his popularity in the army. We gave six members to the PPP from East Pakistan who would have

attended the National Assembly session scheduled to meet on 20 December.

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I arrived in Rawalpindi on 4 November to brief the president on the situation in East Pakistan. Before coming over, I had a map prepared which showed the extent of rebel and Indian activity, and the areas now under their control. Niazi had been painting a very rosy picture (he did this to make sure that his reputation as a 'tiger' was boosted and that the GHQ did not interfere). A very large area on the border and dangerously substantial areas within the province had fallen to the Mukti Bahini and other rebels. The Pakistan Army was hard-pressed to deal with both the internal and external threat.

At the same time, I thought the clouds of war were looming large over Pakistan. Indian troops had, by then, concentrated both on the eastern and the western borders. I was worried about the fate of East Pakistan, and felt that a general war was not in Pakistan's interest: the Pakistan Army had received no equipment after the war of 1965, US military aid had stopped, and we did not have enough financial resources to buy weapons and equipment from other countries in quantities required to replace the old and outdated ones.

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The international situation was hostile. Indian propaganda had won international discourse. Bangladeshis had done us the greatest harm by publicizing exaggerated stories of atrocities. If war started, the Pakistan Army

would find itself in a most disadvantageous position. I expressed these fears to the President and requested that he not start the war from the west. He said that he was not going to make the same mistake that Ayub had made. I then reminded him of my proposal stating October as the more favourable a time to attack and asked why our troops were deployed so. He said that it was for defensive purposes only.

I felt relieved that no hasty decision would be taken. The whole situation, however, depended on India. Mrs Gandhi wanted no compromise. She did not want a political solution to the East Pakistan situation. She had declared that even if the world did not approve of her actions, she was going to force her solution on Pakistan. We could not afford a war while we dealt with an internal insurgency—no nation can fight a war successfully if there is disunity and disharmony within its own country.

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I met the president again on 6 November. This time it was in the Governor House, Lahore. We were meeting to let a PPP delegation know my views on the allocation of seats in the by-elections. Kasuri and another leader were there as representatives of the PPP. I reiterated my earlier stance but promised to arrange for more seats in phase II after the NA session of 20 December. They could have twelve seats from East Pakistan in a reduced representation from there. It was twelve more than they deserved, but the PPP's influence over the army was so great that Yahya could not refuse their unfair demand.

I had throughout maintained that the East Pakistan

situation could only be resolved with sound political action. While Kasuri was there, I said to the president, 'Sir, we [the army] cannot solve this problem. You must hand it over to the civilians. Let them handle it. We are straightforward people. In politics you have to be very flexible. A politician says one thing when he is about to board a plane and totally the opposite when he lands; and he gets away with it. We cannot do that. Let the politicians handle this situation.' The president said, '*Bachchu*, my constitution is not yet ready. How can I handover [to the civilians]?'

On that, Kasuri interjected, 'You can promulgate an ordinance or issue a martial law order to cover the constitutional aspect.'

'Wait till 20 December. Then we will have a constitution,' replied the president. That day never came.

A point to note was Kasuri's suggestion that obstacles to handing over power without a constitution could be overcome through an ordinance or a martial law order. This course of action had been rejected by Bhutto nine months earlier when Yahya had agreed to hand over power to Mujib through the same.

On my way back to Dacca the same day, I met my wife and children in Karachi. I told them that I was very happy during this visit; for the first time, the president had accepted my suggestion to not start a general war even though India would provoke us to do just that. A general war could give India freedom of action—freedom to attack deep inside East Pakistan territory—and East Pakistan would be isolated as all air and sea links would be severed. Furthermore, in case of an Indian attack, West Pakistan would not be able to relieve the military pressure

on East Pakistan because it lacked the capability of a strong counter offensive.

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Once I returned to Dacca, I got busy conducting by-elections. However, on 13 November I was called to attend a meeting at the corps headquarters. I was surprised by the invitation because, during the last few months since Niazi took over, the Governor House had been ignored. The meeting was in preparation for a delegation which was going to the GHQ to brief the COS Army and request them for reinforcements for the Eastern Command. Niazi was not leading the delegation; he said he was too busy with the conduct of ongoing operations.

After the briefing, Niazi, standing in front of a map in the COS corps' office, said, 'We must pinch off this threatening bulge.' When he said this, he put his finger on Belonia, an Indian salient opposite Feni. I said, 'That will mean general war. There will be no PIA. We will be isolated.' This sobered him. He agreed. But this showed how he thought. He had a very unprofessional approach. He was unrealistically boastful and talked about going to Calcutta, of carrying the war into Indian territory and the likes, without having the capability to even adequately defend his own territory.

The delegation returned from the GHQ without much success. West Pakistan could ill-afford to spare troops in the strength requested. They, however, promised three battalions to create a reserve in Dacca. This was none of my business (as my job specification was civil affairs under the governor), but I had complained to the president about

the lack of defence arrangements for Dacca during my last visit. Earlier, 53 Brigade had been located in Dacca area for this specific mission—a mission assigned by the GHQ, which in the army becomes mandatory to be catered to by the lower headquarters. But Niazi moved 53 Brigade outwards to Feni.

Later, whatever reinforcements were flown out to him from West Pakistan, instead of creating the much required and mandated reserve for defence of Dacca, they were dished out to various formations. Additionally, ad hoc formations were created by Niazi which he said were meant as a bluff for the enemy. To achieve this hoax, he created two additional divisional headquarters and three brigade headquarters by breaking up the conventional command structure.

The deployment of 14 Division stretched from Sylhet to Chittagong which had become the most sensitive area with heavy enemy concentrations in Tripura and Assam. Niazi assigned 14 Division the responsibility for the area up to Comilla, while the area south of Comilla was assigned to a newly created ad hoc division—39 Division. Command structure was created by converting the martial law headquarters into divisional headquarters with Maj. Gen. Rahim as the divisional commander.

With a magic wand, Niazi created 36 Division out of thin air: he designated the East Pakistan Rifle's headquarters as HQ 36 Division with Maj. Gen. Muhammad Jamshed as the divisional commander, without providing additional troops to defend Dacca. Instead of deceiving the enemy, the action broke up communications and existing associations between and within the commands.

It also provided the world press with the opportunity to allege that there were five divisions of the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan when in fact there were only three depleted divisions, those too without artillery and armour support.

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Internally, the situation was deteriorating day by day. Before the elections and in the days immediately after, the general masses of East Pakistan were not completely against Pakistan. Led by their political leaders and intellectuals, they wanted more autonomy in the form of the Six Points. They also wanted more power at the Centre.

Originally, the anti-Pakistan movement was only confined to the elite of East Pakistan. During the eight months prior to the Indian Army action, this anti-Pakistan sentiment mutated into a liberation movement. The main cause of this was the postponement of the National Assembly session which eventually led to army action.

The East Pakistani personnel in the army and the second line forces openly rebelled and resisted the Pakistan Army's action. The result was a civil war in which both sides resorted to brutality and ruthlessness. Indian propaganda too played its part, and the majority of Bengali people rose against the Pakistan Army. Even the civil servants were involved in guerrilla and subversive activities.

You could keep nothing secret. The Pakistan Army was living with its own people but was isolated and hated. Its mobility was restricted. Reconnaissance entailed dangers. Even children lay mines to blow up army vehicles.

Individual and even platoon-strength detachments were ambushed in the country.

Reports began emerging of *razakars* defecting or handing control over stations to them. There were also accounts of the massacre of leaders of pro-Pakistan elements. The situation continued to escalate. Attacks on religious teachers and madrassas became frequent; the Bangladesh movement could ill afford to let Islamic teachings play their part in developing brotherly relations with West Pakistan. Attacks on power lines and communiction systems intensified to further burden an already shattered economy.

The world press published many stories of fabricated brutalities. I saw a despatch submitted by either a *Newsweek* or *Time* correspondent (journalists were required to submit their despatches to us for censoring) which contained a horrible story of military action in a village near Tangail. It said that all Hindus of the village had been killed by the army, who had then sexually assaulted the women with bayonets. A picture of unbelievable atrocities had been painted.

I was to hold a press briefing in Hotel Intercontinental the same day, so I got army sources to confirm the story's veracity. As it turns out, the story was totally false. There were no Hindus, not even one, living in that village. The army had been nowhere near it. Before starting the press briefing, I asked the concerned journalist about the sources for his story, asking whether he himself had visited the area. He said he had not visited the area but had gone near enough and a 'friend' had supplied the information. I told him that since the story was false, I could not clear

it; he flew out to Beirut and filed his story from there. The account was published in the weekly magazine and the whole world believed it to be true and was influenced by it. The Bengalis believed any story about large-scale destruction, molestation of women, and general massacre. This created a sense of self-preservation and nationalism in the masses, thus making the people hate the army and Pakistan all the more.

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People tend to believe stories and rumours, more so in hateful environments like the one we were in. I remember a delegation from Noakhali coming to see me a few months after the military action, and telling me that they were surprised to see Dacca University intact. They had been told that the university building had been razed to the ground by the army.[28] This was the general impression created by the world press and the Indian and Bangladeshi propagandists.

On the other hand, the bias in favour of India that exists in the international press always lets it get away with acts that would be widely condemned had they been Pakistan's. For example, while we were prisoners of war (POW), we read that students in Benares University had taken over buildings. This was a small isolated event, not part of a larger rebellion against the government. But the Indian Army launched an attack on the university, killing one hundred and fifty students, and enforced the law. The Indian press arrogantly praised the army's swift action and its results. In Dacca, student casualties had been much less than that, but the Indians made a case for military

intervention anyway. Similarly, if the Golden Temple episode had occurred in Pakistan, the Indian Army by now would have embarked on their self-assumed role of liberators.

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Anti-Pakistan sentiment had permeated all classes of society. Even government servants were affected. One day Gen. Tikka, the East Pakistan communications secretary, and I discussed the problem of transporting food from Chittagong to Dacca. We decided to use the railway line to Chandpur for the purpose. The same night, two bridges along that line were blown up. Our plan had been leaked. Only one of us could have done that. Surely, it was the secretary communications who was contributing his share in the liberation movement.

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One day I had a story on my table that was to be filed by one of the foreign correspondents. The story stated that there were many women in Dacca who were impregnated because they were raped by West Pakistan army personnel and that the army was looking for gynaecologists in the city but nobody was prepared to deliver the babies. I called the concerned correspondent and Major Siddique Salik[29] to my office and told the correspondent to go to the cantonment and enter any house he wanted to verify this information. 'Salik will accompany you. If you find even one single woman pregnant, I will clear this story for you to dispatch,' I told him. He accepted the offer, entered as many houses as he could, but found no women, let alone pregnant ones.

When he came back and confirmed that he had found none, I said, 'Will you now withhold your story?'

He said, 'No, because my story relates what the Bengalis are saying. And what is more we have to sell our papers. This is what our readers want.'

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It was 1 December 1971. Governor Malik had returned from his visit to West Pakistan, where he had met the president. I asked him whether he was able to talk to the president on the subject of war. He had done so, he said, but had not gotten a categorical assurance that they would not let the war escalate by reacting to Indian attacks in East Pakistan.

India had violated all international laws regarding relationships between two sovereign states. From a strictly legal perspective, India had committed aggression against East Pakistan—a part of Pakistan. It had attacked Pakistan. There is no doubt about that. But converting a border conflict into all-out war, although morally justified, was not in the best interest of our country. Only a massive attack in October against some strategically vital areas in the west (with the objective of forcing India to shift some formations massed against East Pakistan) may have aided the armed forces' strategy. But it was now December and too late for such an attack. The enemy had very methodically, and with sound strategic comprehension, deployed forces in a defensive posture against West Pakistan.

The governor told me that the president would not be coming over. Instead, General Hamid, COS Army, would be visiting on 2 December. On the said date, we were told

that General Hamid was not coming either. My conclusion was that war was imminent.

When I told the people around me, some left for West Pakistan the same day. I thought for a while of doing the same. I had standing permission from the president to visit Rawalpindi whenever I considered it necessary. I could use any official duty as an excuse to escape the coming war, and the governor would have had no objection. But my conscience objected. True, nobody in East Pakistan knew that war was around the corner. They would not link my departure with the war. But I thought that if I left, I would be deserting my colleagues and comrades at the most crucial time.

I had recently recalled all civil administrators who had gone on Eid holidays to West Pakistan. I thought my departure to safety would be an act damaging to the well-known military code of honour. As I was answerable to no one, I could leave, but my conscience did not allow me to do so. So I stayed, knowing full well the dangers looming ahead.

On 3 December, I worked as usual, meeting politicians and MNAs to coordinate their travel to Rawalpindi to attend the proposed National Assembly session, which was scheduled to start on 20 December. Yahya had appointed a law commission headed by Justice Cornelius to draw up a constitution for Pakistan. Its main goal was to provide arrangements for the Armed Forces' role in the country's governance. As the day for the meeting of the National Assembly never came, one does not know what the impact of such a constitutional arrangement would have been. Such an arrangement would never

have been acceptable to the politically-conscious eastern wing of the country. Perhaps, the powers to be had already written off East Pakistan and were only planning for West Pakistan.

# 10

# East Pakistan's Defence Handicaps

FROM A MILITARY POINT OF VIEW, THE DEFENCE OF EAST Pakistan posed many problems, the major one being that its main base, located in West Pakistan, was separated by one thousand miles of hostile Indian territory. As a poor and developing country, Pakistan could not afford to have, much less maintain, large and strong forces in both wings. Strategists at the highest level, therefore, decided that dividing the armed forces equally would weaken overall defence—it would be strong nowhere.

Given the significance of West Pakistan's strategic location from an international and geopolitical standpoint, it was wisely decided that the main forces would remain in West Pakistan. As a corollary to this decision, it was decided in the planning that East Pakistan's defence would lie in West Pakistan. In simple terms, it meant that in the event of an attack on East Pakistan, a massive and powerful attack would be launched from West Pakistan, so that the enemy was forced to withdraw. A situation where East Pakistan forces would be left to defend themselves was never visualized.

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Geographically and militarily, East Pakistan could be considered a salient in India's belly. Any salient has certain

characteristics. If the possessor of a salient is strong, the salient provides a launching pad and an advantageous position for offensive operations. But if the forces defending a salient are weak, then the enemy will enjoy an advantage by attacking it from all sides.

A look at the map of East Pakistan shows that while the entire territory is a salient itself, there is a large number of Indian salients within it. It is surrounded in entirety from three sides by the Indian landmass, except for twenty-six miles of Burmese territory near Cox's Bazaar way down in the south, connected with Chittagong only by a beach road. In the south lies the Indian Ocean, and in the absence of a Pakistani naval force, the Indians ruled the sea. Consequently, East Pakistan was completely surrounded by India.

In a defensive battle, the area would have certain advantages and disadvantages. In theory, it appeared to provide interior lines of communication with the possibility of lateral shifts of forces from the centre and from one sector to the other. In practice, however, the numerous wide rivers created four independent sectors, without the prospect of a Central Reserve Force which could move from one sector to another. Without air and riverine control, a lateral shift was even less likely. Exploiting interior lines of communications was possible only if the forces had mobility, coupled with useable lines of communication, air parity [with the enemy], and control over river crossings.

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Because of the wide rivers, four operational sectors were created. These were:

## OPERATIONAL SECTORS—EAST PAKISTAN

**Rajshahi Sector**: This lay north of the River Ganges and west of the Jamuna and Brahmaputra rivers. Jamuna had no bridge as the river is ten miles wide. In the south was the Harding Bridge over the Ganges near Pabna. In this sector, there was an Indian salient touching Hilli. An enemy thrust from Hilli to the river line would cut this sector into two quite easily. This area was the most critical geographical location for the defence of East Pakistan. The northern area too was exposed to multiple thrusts from the Shiliguri Salient.

**Khulna Sector**: This had the Ganges in its north and the Jamuna in the east, with the River Madhumati branching off from the Ganges and flowing through the middle. This sector offered a broad front to the Indian landmass of West Bengal. Two main roads from Calcutta entered this area with many subsidiary routes and no obstacles at the border. The Madhumati was the first major obstacle, but the major cities of Jessore, Khulna, and Kushtia were located in front of it.

**Dacca Sector**: This sector consisted mainly of the area lying west of River Meghna and east of the Jamuna; both flanks were protected by these two. Its exposed front lay in the north, providing the most dangerous approach, as the enemy could reach Dacca directly from here, bypassing all troops in other sectors, and with only one river to cross in

the area of Jamalpur-Mymensingh. In the Indian territory, there were hills which were considered an obstacle for the assembly of forces. However, as the Indians would have sufficient time for movement in their own territory, it would not present an insurmountable problem. There were good roads leading down from Jamalpur-Mymensingh through Tangail and on to Dacca. Tangail had a small airfield. A branch of the Jamuna called the Brahmaputra provided a reasonable water obstacle.

**The Eastern Sector**: This stretched from Sylhet to Chittagong, and from there to Cox's Bazaar near the Burmese border. This was the most exposed sector, with about seven hundred miles of open frontier with India. River Meghna lay to its west and provided numerous routes to the attacker. The sector was around sixty to seventy miles wide, with a south-to-north road from Chittagong to Sylhet all along the border, and at places, hardly five hundred yards from it. The railway line lay so close to the border that a stretch of quite a few yards passed over Indian territory; the Akhaura railway station platform was actually in India. The Agartala Salient provided easy access to the River Meghna line. There was a bridge over the Meghna in the area of Bhairab.

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The lay of the land was such that all roads converged from the border to Dacca. There were no lateral roads except the one from Chittagong to Sylhet. Even that was so close to the border that it could be cut off by small arms fire all along its length. Consequently, enemy forces'

movement to Dacca was greatly facilitated. When the alignment of roads was objected to, it was overruled on political and economic grounds.

The important cities of Khulna, Jessore, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Saidpur, Rangpur, Sylhet, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, and Feni were very close to the Indian border. Chittagong was exposed to attacks from the sea. All river obstacles not only lay behind the above-mentioned cities, but also the entire sector itself. To base the defence on river obstacles, one would have to withdraw from large areas of East Pakistan.

The railway line had been laid during the British days and obviously had no strategic role to play in the context of India-Pakistan confrontation. The track was cut and became unusable even before the hostilities began. The Hilli Railway Station had its station master's bungalow door opening in Pakistan with its rear window opening in India.

During the monsoon, the whole area would get flooded. There are approximately three hundred water channels which would have to be navigated during the summer months. This would limit military operations during the monsoon. During the period November–March, however, the entire area of East Pakistan was as good for mobile operations as were the plains of the Punjab.

The total frontier to be defended was twenty-six hundred miles, compared with the eastern front in West Pakistan which was a mere thirteen hundred miles from Chamb to Karachi. Each sector offered a minimum of four major approaches towards its vital and sensitive areas to the enemy.

## VARIOUS LINES OF DEFENCE—EAST PAKISTAN

For the deployment of forces, East Pakistan territory appeared to offer three possible lines of defence: the outer ring, the intermediate ring, and the close ring.

**Outer Ring**: A defensive line near the border ahead of Jessore, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Saidpur, Rangpur, Jamalpur–Mymensingh, Sylhet, Comilla, and Chittagong, formed in a semi-crescent shape. Such a deployment would be spread over eighteen hundred miles and would create wide gaps between the defended localities.

**Intermediate Ring**: A defensive line along the Madhumati in the Khulna Sector. Jessore and Khulna were out of this strong defensive position. Leaving Dinajpur and Rangpur out of strong defensive positions from the north, this ring led to the Rajshahi Sector from the south of Hilli. In the Dacca Sector, the defensive position ran along the River Brahmaputra in the north and River Meghna in the east, with defensive bridgeheads across the river. In the Eastern Sector, Sylhet and Chittagong were independent defensive positions. In order to deny the Meghna River to the enemy, Comilla had to be abandoned by occupying a defensive position east of the Meghna.

**Close Ring**: A defensive position along the River Jamuna in the west, Brahmaputra in the north, and Meghna in the east, i.e. only the Dacca Sector (also referred to as the 'Bowl') was intended to be strongly defended. All troops were to have river obstacles in front of them. Dacca was

of paramount importance from military, political, and psychological standpoints. Therefore, Dacca was required to be defended till the end and at all costs. East Pakistan could best be defended by a mix of intermediate ring line and close ring defence by deploying them as far forward as the water obstacles were, then fighting delaying battles, finally falling on close ring defence (of Dacca). Every inch of the territory could not be defended. With the forces that could be spared from West Pakistan, they could only hope to 'remain in being' till a political solution was arrived at through the United Nations.

**The Political Factor**: From a purely military perspective, the close ring provided the strongest operational defensive concept. It was easy for military pundits from West Pakistan to advocate such a strategy. I was one of those who advocated a modified form of it. But if we consider it from an East Pakistani perspective, this was a frightening concept in which one was to surrender a very large (actually a major) portion of East Pakistan to the enemy; therefore, from a purely political point of view, the concept would be unacceptable to the East Pakistanis, to whom their household, homes and the honour of their women were as sacred as were to West Pakistanis.

During and after the 1965 war with India, friendly but foreign strategists advocated withdrawal from Lahore and Sialkot. How many of us would accept such a strategy voluntarily? Thus, the close ring or Dacca Bowl defensive strategy was useful only to achieve a political solution of the conflict in the United Nations. Its main aim would be 'to remain in being', to ramp up international pressure

against India, and to force them to withdraw or seek a political settlement.

The above is based on the appreciation I wrote, and later conducted as Ex-SUNDERBAN I in 1967. Thereafter, I made whatever contribution was required by Maj. Gen. Muzaffaruddin and Lt Gen. Yaqub Khan in finalizing the concept of operations for the defence of East Pakistan. The concept was:

i. Defence of territory was not possible. It was more important for the forces to remain in being.
ii. Defence was to utilize the maximum river obstacles to enhance defence capabilities.
iii. Dacca was to be defended at all costs.

This was the plan till Niazi appeared on the scene. He was a sepoy-general and despised intellectuals. He was an extrovert and a boastful commander who relied heavily on propaganda and self-projection through boisterous statements.

Niazi changed the concept of 'operation'. His operational instruction stated that the mission of the Eastern Command was defence of East Pakistan, while:

i. Taking offensive action in the direction of either Tripura, Calcutta, or Shiliguri Complex;
ii. Absorbing maximum Indian territory should an opportunity offer itself; and
iii. Ensuring defence of Dacca at all costs.

Based on this offensive-oriented mission, he decided to adopt a forward defensive posture grounded in strong

points and fortresses with pre-positioned reserves to undertake counter-offensive into Indian territory as a riposte. The keynote of this concept as given by Niazi in his operational instructions was, 'in short, the effect desired is to delay, involve, and disperse enemy offensive straightaway, wrest initiative from him and in the process, inflict casualties, weaken him, and finally destroy him'. A high-sounding note indeed, but given the forces at his disposal, devoid of pragmatism and reality.

A wargame like ex-SUNDERBAN should have been held after the plan was formed. However, only a discussion was held in the presence of COS Gen. Hamid. All objections were ruled out. Gen. Hamid, and later the GHQ, offered no comments on Niazi's unrealistic planning.

On the other hand, the Indians fully understood the advantages to them if the Pakistanis adopted a forward posture and static defence. They cleverly activated the entire front with Mukti Bahini attacks. Niazi, like a bull, counter-attacked each and every incursion and thereby, had all his forces in the forward posture and completely exhausted when the general war started on 4 December 1971.

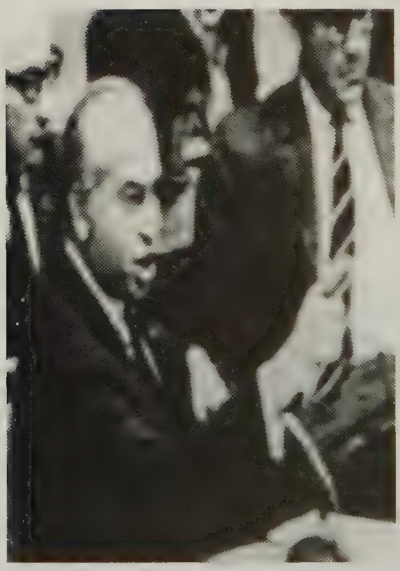
The Indians were going to take no risks. They had, under the guise of Naxalite revolt in West Bengal, assembled more than eight divisions and one armour brigade around East Pakistan. Each of these divisions was thrice the size of a normal brigade, and each brigade consisted of battalions with three times more troops than normal; therefore there was in the area, a force of more than one-hundred and fifty thousand soldiers, who had the support of a fifty-thousand-strong BSF and a hundred thousand Mukti Bahini.

৫ ফেব্রুয়ারি ১৯৬৬, লাহোরে ৬ দফা দাবিসহ বিবৃতি
Mujib announces the Six Points in Lahore — 5 February 1966

1. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announces the Six Points in Lahore, 5 February 1966

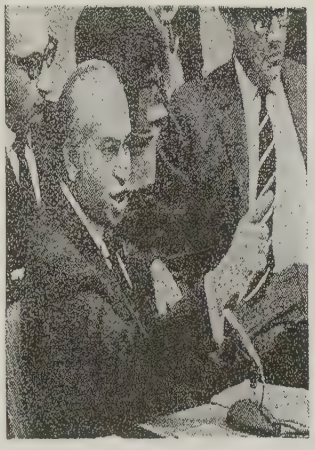
2. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's declaration of independence, 7 March 1971

3. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman raises the flag of independent Bangladesh, 23 March 1971



4. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's farewell speech at the United Nations Security Council, 15 December 1971

4.1. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto walks out of the United Nations Security Council, 15 December 1971



Zulfikar Ali Bhutto denouncing U.N. Security Council

# *Bhutto Denounces Council And Walks Out in Tears*

By HENRY TANNER
Special to The New York Times

UNITED NATIONS, N. Y., Dec. 15—Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, his face streaked with tears, walked out of the Security Council today after accusing it of "legalizing aggression."

Outside the chamber, he said: "I hate this body. I don't want to see their faces again. I'd rather go back to a destroyed Pakistan."

Then, followed by seven grim-faced members of his delegation, including the regular representative, Agha Shahi, Mr. Bhutto strode down the carpeted main hall past milling groups of surprised diplomats, and was driven off in a misty rain.

Mr. Bhutto did not specify the immediate reason for his action. But, in referring to "dilatory tactics" and "filibustering," he appeared to allude to successive vetoes by the Soviet Union — a supporter of India — of resolutions calling for troop withdrawals.

Mr. Bhutto's parting words to the Council, before he ripped up his notes, pushed back his chair and rose, were these:

"Mr. President, I am not a rat. I've never ratted in my life. I have faced assassination attempts, I've faced imprisonment. Today I am not ratting, but I am leaving your Security Council.

"I find it disgaceful to my

Continued on Page 17, Column 1

Yutaka Nagata/United Nations

Mr. Bhutto, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, leaving the meeting. In the foreground is Swaran Singh of India.

The New York Times
Published December 16 1971
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4.2. Newspaper story of Bhutto's UNSC walkout

# *Weeping Bhutto Leaves Council, Saying It Legalizes Aggression*

Continued From Page 1, Col. 5

person and to my country to remain here a moment longer. Impose any decision, have a treaty worse than Versailles, legalize aggression, legalize occupation—I will not be a party to it. We will fight. My country harkens for me.

"Why should I waste my time here in the Security Council? I will not be a party to the ignominous surrender of part of my country. You can take your Security Council; here you are. I am going."

### The Debate Resumes

The delegates around the circular table looked on expressionless as he left the chamber. A few moments later the Council President, Ismael B. Taylor-Kamara, gave the floor to Rachid Driss of Tunisia and the debate droned on as it had yesterday and the day before.

On his march through the corridor, Mr. Bhutto said that Pakistan was not breaking relations with the Council or the United Nations.

"Ambassador Shahi will be available," he said.

### Council Meets Twice

The Council met twice again in the evening. The Chinese and Soviet delegates, who were the main speakers in the first evening session, exchanged bitter charges of big power politics and ideological betrayal.

But in the second session, which started shortly before 11 P.M., there was a hint that the big power deadlock might be broken tomorrow.

The delegates from Britain and France, Sir Colin Crowe and Jacques Kosciusko-Morizet, introduced a joint proposal whose main provisions called for a cease-fire and for a comprehensive political settlement between Pakistan and the secessionist insurgents.

Yakov A. Malik of the Soviet Union also introduced a resolution calling for a cease-fire and a "simultaneous" political settlement. Western diplomats linked his brief and muttered statement to the fact that news reports arriving in the Council chamber during the evening foreshadowed the imminent fall of Dacca.

Many of these diplomats have been assuming that the Soviet Union, which has been supporting India, would permit the Council to act once Dacca had fallen.

The Council adjourned around midnight without a vote until tomorrow.

The Council was initially called into session hurriedly at 12:30 P.M. at Mr. Bhutto's request

At first it appeared that Mr. Bhutto left in anger over the British-French initiative. During the Council meeting he hurled an implied charge of cowardice at the two delegations, which had abstained previously on all resolutions calling for cease-fire and withdrawal.

"Gallic logic and British experience, whatever it is," he scoffed. "Remember that there is no such thing as a neutral animal. I respect the Russians for having a clear position." But after his walkout, Mr. Bhutto said that his delegation had not rejected the British-French draft.

His voice often breaking, Mr. Bhutto told the Council that his 11-year-old son called him from Pakistan to say, "Don't come back with a document of surrender."

### 'Imperative to Come Here'

"I felt that it was imperative for me to come here and to seek justice from the Security Council," Mr. Bhutto said. "But I must say that the Security Council has denied my country that justice. From the moment I arrived we have been caught by dilatory tactics.

"The Security Council, I am afraid, has excelled in the art of filibustering. With some cynicism I watched yesterday a full hour wasted on whether the members would be ready to meet at 9:30 A.M. or bed and breakfast required that they should meet at 11 A.M.

"The representative of Somalia referred to the population of East Pakistan as 56 million, but later on he corrected himself to say 76 million. If he had waited for a few more days, he need not have corrected himself, because millions are dying.

### 'Monument for the Veto'

"We have been frustrated by the veto. Let's build a monument for the veto. Let's build a monument for impotence and incapacity.

"But remember the Biblical saying: 'As you sow so shall you reap.' Today we are the guniea pigs but there will be others."

Turning to Yakov A. Malik, the Soviet delegate, Mr. Bhutto said: "You throw out your chest and you pound the table. You don't talk like Comrade Malik, but like Czar Malik. I am glad you are smiling. I am not, my heart is breaking."

Later in his suite at the Pierre Hotel, Mr. Bhutto said that he favored negotiation with the East Pakistani secessionists but under one condition, —namely that Pakistan be recognized as an entity. He indicated that the tie between East and West Pakistan could be very loose.

How could such negotiations be held if Dacca fell? he was asked. He answered: "I think the secessionist leaders will find it in their interest not to close the door on Pakistan. They will want to talk with both India and Pakistan."

Mr. Bhutto added that he accepted the British-French resolution as a basis for negotiation provided it did not specify that one negotiating partner was Bangladesh, or Bengal Nation, the Independent country proclaimed by the Bengali insurgents in the East.

### Notes Soviet 'Pressure'

Mr. Bhutto said that the Soviet Union had exerted "tremendous pressure" in messages not only to Pakistan but also to other Asian countries since the beginning of the crisis. "The Russians have outdone the Indians," he said.

He expressed concern that having won a free hand in East Pakistan, India, with Soviet support, might move into the Pakistani part of Kashmir, thus provoking a Chinese intervention.

Throughout the interview there was a strong suggestion that the Pakistani military Government was incapable of coping with the present situation and that it was essential for Pakistan to return to popular government.

During the interview Mr. Bhutto received a call from his 18-year-old daughter, who is studying government at Harvard. His part of the conversation went like this:

"I didn't storm out, I walked out. It was too much of a farce. I had to inject some truth. No, I didn't lose my temper."

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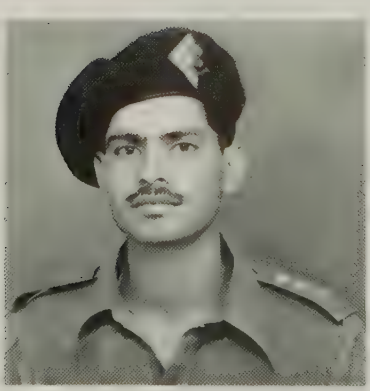
5. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman arrives in Lahore to attend the Islamic Summit, hosted by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, 23 February 1974

5.1. Algerian president, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and Bhutto at the Islamic Summit, Lahore, 23 February 1974

5.2. Yasser Arafat, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bhutto, and Qaddafi 23 February 1974

6. President Ayub Khan, General Muzaffarud Din, Brig Rao Farman, Dacca

7. Lt Jabar Jang Singh, Lt Rao Farman, Lt Kumar Sharma, 1944



8. Captain Rao Farman Ali Khan, 1948

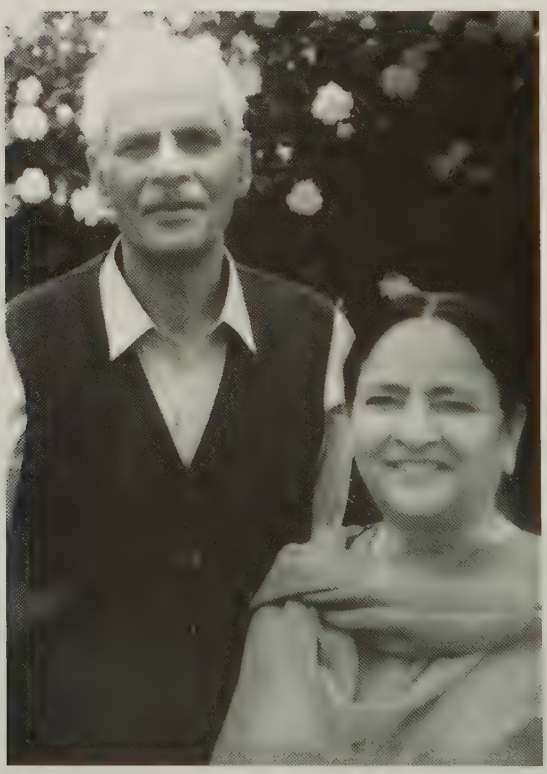
9. Major Rao Farman Ali Khan at the Staff College, Camberley, June 1952

10. Major Rao Farman Ali Khan with Majors M. A. Ashraf and Jamal Said Mian at Fort Levenworth, Kansas, USA, 1955

11. Director General Military Training (DGMT), 1975

12. National Defence College (NDFC) Rawalpindi

13. Federal Minister for Petroleum, House of Commons, London, 1982



14. General and Mrs Rao Farman

Three corps headquarters were employed to attack from the east, the west, and the north, with the aim to reach Dacca. Each corps had the support of engineers to cross the water obstacles. A helicopter fleet—enough to transport the entire battalion in a couple of hours—provided vertical mobility. A para-brigade was located at Calcutta to be used when required.

In contrast, the Pakistan Army consisted of three divisions and one brigade. 14 Division used to be the only division in East Pakistan prior to the military action of March. It was the only division which had its own complements of artillery and engineers. It had no armour units. After the military action, divisions 9 and 16 were flown out to East Pakistan. As they were flown out, they took no support in the form of artillery and engineers, since these were required for the defence of West Pakistan and were retained.

The GHQ graciously spared an armour regiment which was equipped with obsolete M24 tanks discarded even during the Second World War. It was a death-trap and no match for the M54 and PT76 of the Indian Army. The Pakistan Army in East Pakistan was essentially an infantry force suited to the task at hand—that of internal security. A total of four regiments of artillery defended almost nineteen hundred miles of active border. One of the regiments had a 3.7" Howitzer, a weapon discarded before the Second World War, and whose range was only close to seven thousand yards. The firepower available in the whole of East Pakistan was less than that of one division defending Lahore.

Against ten squadrons of modern aircraft, the PAF had

only one squadron of obsolete F86s. All IAF airbases were located around East Pakistan, within ten to fifteen minutes of flying time. Attacks could be sustained for a maximum duration. The IAF had far superior aircraft at the time. There could be no comparison between the F86 and the MIG21—one flying at 600 mph and the other at 1100 mph.

The Indian Navy had deployed their only aircraft carrier in the south. Pakistan had virtually no naval force. There were only a few gunboats, good enough only for Intelligence service duties.

On top of this, General Niazi had deployed his entire force well forward, even farther than the conceptual outer ring of defence.

# 11

## The Indian Attack

IT WAS AFTER *MAGHRIB* PRAYERS ON 3 DECEMBER 1971 THAT TWO BBC correspondents, Gavin Young and his colleague, sat down to discuss the situation with me. The mere presence of a large number of senior world media correspondents indicated the possibility of something big taking place. Somehow, they get information of all major happenings, prior to the events, converging like vultures wherever they smell disaster.

Gavin Young wanted my opinion regarding Mujib's release, to which I said he should be released in the larger interest of the country. Young told me that when he had put the same question to President Yahya, he had responded in the negative, saying his honour was involved. 'The honour of the country is more important than that of an individual,' I said. Young replied saying he had said the same thing to Yahya, but the latter had not agreed to release Mujib.

Then, he asked whether I thought there would be a war between India and Pakistan. My response was something I had been contemplating since the first skirmishes began: I did not think there should be a war. The onus of reacting to Indian attacks lay on us and we would not like to start the war as it was not in our best interest.

Before I could finish my answer, the telephone rang. It

was from the Corps HQ, saying the war between India and Pakistan had started. He commanded me to report to the headquarters immediately. Excusing myself without telling them that it had begun, I bade Young and his colleague goodbye, and went to inform the governor. He had not been informed by the president, so was taken aback and became perturbed.

I went over to the headquarters, where we were briefed about the latest developments. The briefing was very sketchy as they themselves had no prior knowledge of the start of the war, nor of the developments on ground or in the air. I asked whether our forces were in a position to engage in battle. The answer was yes. There was no panic. They sounded confident. To my enquiry about what they expected from us, i.e. the civilian government, Niazi said, 'We can look after ourselves. We have everything.'

Not only were the East Pakistan governor and the commander of the Eastern Command kept in the dark about the GHQ's intentions, the commander-in-chief of the Pakistan Navy too came to know of the war starting from the news broadcast. Unbelievably, DG ISI Gen. Jilani did not know about it either—he had thought it a joke when he first got the news. How could anybody hope to win in such an uncoordinated and haphazard effort was the question on all minds.

4 December was a quiet day in East Pakistan—the calm before the storm. That day, the Indians carried out the final movement of their troops to assembly areas for attacks. The Mukti Bahini, however, remained active against the rear of Pakistani forces, disrupting communications and supplies.

Given the shortage of troops, the Pakistan Army had used Bengali labour to dig trenches and develop fortifications. The rebels had infiltrated the labourers, who thus had complete information about the Pakistan Army's deployment. Even otherwise, the rebels were residents of the areas and knew the extent, width, and depth of the Pakistan Army deployment and defence. The information had duly been passed on to the Indians. Armed with this information and guided by the rebels, the Indians attacked in all sectors on the eve of 5 December.

During the morning briefing on the 5th, we were given the terrible news of one battalion's surrender and the critical situation of the other in the area south of Comilla. To make matters worse, the battalion commanders had been forced to give a call for surrender to their troops over megaphones. That they had agreed to do so bore testament to the troops' low morale. News from other sectors was no better, indicating advances by the Indian Army.

As it turns out, we had lost two F86s in aerial combat earlier. The Air Force sent out two aircraft on the morning of 5 December and they returned at 9 a.m., ending our air operations and air support to ground forces. Flying in from all directions, ten squadrons of the Indian Air Force kept the only operational airfield at Dacca under constant attack.

The anti-aircraft regiment deployed for the defence of the airfield performed heroically. They manned their guns till the last. Even after ceasefire, they brought down a Canberra. They were a brave lot and shot down at least four enemy aircraft on the first day. When one of the aircraft fell in the Mirpur area, there was wild rejoicing all over.

Sweets were distributed. The people's reaction caused for an equal amount of elation at the Governor House.

Suddenly, there was in a shift Bengali knowledgeable quarters as well. Those who could understand the implications of Indian aggression feared occupation in the event of an Indian victory. People were heard saying that they did not want the Indian troops to replace Pakistani troops, as Pakistanis were at least Muslim brothers, whom they could talk to. And so, fear of the unknown took over.

Our rejoicing was short-lived as we soon received news of Indian aircraft attacking with Russian-made bombs which had created very deep craters on our only runway, essentially putting it out of operational use. We made arrangement to repair the runway, but the Pakistan Air Force found it irreparable. They got orders to send all pilots to West Pakistan through Rangoon. The war was to go on without air support. The very fact that pilots were withdrawn revealed that the authorities in Rawalpindi had surrendered East Pakistan.

I made last-minute efforts to convince the people to put up a show of determination by carrying out a one-way air attack on the Calcutta Air Base. I also volunteered to get all electricity poles removed from the New Capital main road, since the road was quite fit to allow fighter aircraft to take off. But Calcutta was considered too far for F-86s to come back after the attack. However, as they were of no use to us standing there in Dacca, I recommended that they might as well be used for a one-way operation. This could be called a suicide mission, but it would have shown to the world that we were determined to fight till the last breath.

Knowing Pakistan's aerial capacity at the moment, the

Indians did not expect an air attack. Their aircraft were just standing on the Calcutta airfield, thereby presenting us with an opportunity to inflict maximum damage to enemy planes. Thereafter, the pilots could bail out after completing their mission. However, my suggestion was not accepted, and on the night of 6 December, the pilots were flown out, en route to West Pakistan via Rangoon.

***

After the briefing at the Corps HQ on 6 December, I suggested gradually pulling back Gen. Niazi's troops on to the rivers. Pointing to the map, I asked him what the troops in Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, and Comilla were doing, expressing my fears of the possibility of the narrow neck opposite Hilli being cut at any time. I proposed that troops from Dinajpur, Rangpur, and Thakurgaon fall back to Bogra Comilla garrison to the Meghna river line, and similar manoeuvres be carried out in other sectors. He looked me straight in the eyes and said, 'They have not been attacked yet.'

It became obvious that he had no concept of strategic withdrawals. Instead of carrying out planned withdrawals, he issued orders that there would be no withdrawal unless troops had suffered 75 per cent casualties. This was a highly unprofessional order and hardly needs comment. He did, however, promise to talk to the commanders concerned.

Nothing was heard on the 7th, but on the 8th, when asked, Niazi said he had discussed my proposal with Brig. Mansoor H. Atif, brigade commander at Comilla, who said that he could not withdraw because the enemy

was behind them as well, boxing them in. News from all sectors was continuously painting a disastrous situation. The map of West Pakistan had been replaced in the briefing room by an East Pakistan operational map.

***

Earlier, the news from West Pakistan was that our troops had made advances on all fronts, but later came vague hints of reversals. But India claimed significant victories in the Azad Kashmir and Sialkot sectors. The most disheartening news was the sinking of the submarine, Ghazi. We were hoping that Ghazi would at least sink the Indian aircraft carrier, Vikrant.

Since we heard nothing from our own sources, we felt that perhaps the Indian claims were correct. The Indians became bolder and raided the Karachi oil installations, setting fire to a few oil tanks. The Indian Air Force reportedly had freedom to the skies as the Pakistan Air Force was being preserved by its commander-in-chief, Air Marshal Rahim, for a six month-long war. This could be his own decision, motivated by some political considerations or maybe decided by the joint operational headquarters. One would never know. The impact it had on the minds of East Pakistan forces was that even in West Pakistan, we were losing ground.

Pakistan's defensive measures, operational plans, and deployment strategy were known to Bengali officers. A large number of them belonging to the Pakistan Army, Air Force, and Navy, had fled to India and handed over marked maps to the Indians. Major Manzoor in particular, who later as major general killed President

Ziaur Rehman of Bangladesh, was brigade major in the Sialkot sector in 1971. He crossed over to India with the marked map, allowing Indians to move into unoccupied areas of Sialkot.

The Air Force plans were revealed by a Bengali Air Force officer in much the same way. This assisted the Indians in dispersing their aircraft before the PAF attack on the evening of 3 December. If enemy plans are known and dispositions are no secret, the conduct of successful operations is quite easy. Even without the quisling amongst its ranks, the Pakistani armed forces faced a difficult task; with enemy agents and supporters everywhere, the task had become close to impossible.

Upon returning from the morning briefing on 6 December at the Corps HQ, I was called by the governor. He had heard disturbing news from civilian sources. His hometowns, Chowgacha and Chuadanga, had been overrun and occupied by the Indians. These were border towns. While I did confirm the news, I suggested that the best person to give him a factually correct and authentic picture was Niazi. A meeting of the governor was therefore arranged with him. The governor, accompanied by Chief Secretary Muzaffar Hussain, went to the Corps HQ where Gen. Niazi briefed them.

The next morning, i.e. 7 December, the governor asked me to arrange for the visit of ministers to various areas so that they could boost the morale of the people. This was in fact, Niazi's proposal. He had also told the governor that there was nothing to worry about on the operational side; the army was strong enough to defend East Pakistan.

I had a different opinion and told the governor that

there was no way for the ministers to move out of Dacca. The ferries on all rivers had been abandoned, and boats were set adrift down the rivers by rebels. Roads were unsafe. He said that he had told Niazi this and he had suggested the use of army helicopters. When I contacted the Corps HQ, they said no helicopters could be spared as all six were engaged in operational work day and night.

This was our plight. We had a mighty force of six helicopters to fight an insurgency and a war! The US had more than four thousand helicopters in Vietnam and still found them insufficient. Niazi had merely bluffed. I suggested that the governor invite him to the Governor House where he may express himself more freely. In an army headquarter, in front of his subordinates, a commander has to display courage and feign being tough and determined. It was a requirement, I said, and that was how it should be.

But as head of the civilian government of an isolated province, the governor was entitled to know the factual, truthful, and realistic situation, so he could form his own opinion about what to do. Thereafter, Niazi came to meet the governor. I received him and took him to the governor where Muzaffar Hussain, the chief secretary, also joined us.

As we sat down in front of him, with Niazi on my left and Muzaffar on my right, the governor started with a statement in general terms saying that in war, anything could happen. 'When two sides fight, one wins and the other may lose. At times a commander may have to surrender, and at other …'

Before the governor could finish, I heard a shriek, followed by the sound of loud sobbing. I saw Niazi

weeping with his hands covering his face. At that moment, the butler entered with tea (it was customary in the Governor House to bring tea or coffee within a few minutes of the guest's arrival). Muzaffar hastily took the tray from the butler and quickly pushed him out. Since he was supposed to serve the tea, his exit drew attention.

When questioned by the military secretary and others, he replied, 'The sahabs were weeping.' Later when I heard about this I clarified that only one 'sahab' was weeping. However, this news, like all such news, spread immediately all over Dacca. The impression it created was of a desperate army. It caused sadness amongst our friends, but the guerrillas were encouraged. Soon, their activity within Dacca increased.

Whether Niazi cried because he did not like the use of the word 'surrender' or because he was a broken man, no one knew. I am only stating what I saw and what negativity it created. The impression the governor, the chief secretary, and I got was that the Pakistan Army was likely to be beaten in the field in the not too distant future. We only had a few days to work out a political solution to avoid a catastrophe.

***

It was decided to inform the president of the situation so he could take an informed decision. Niazi had not been revealing the true picture and therefore, the press and the people in West Pakistan did not know till two days later that Jessore had fallen. A telex message was jointly prepared with Niazi's approval. He, however, did ask me to get it sent from the Governor House. I did not

realize at the time that he was playing a dangerous game, keeping his options open for when the need arose to deny his concurrence with the message.

The message stated clearly the dismal military situation and expressed doubts over the strategy adopted in the United Nations. Our delegation was asking for a simple ceasefire and withdrawal of Indian forces, without indicating or promising political steps to resolve the problems in East Pakistan. Nobody in the world at that time would accept a resolution which did not have a political solution. The governor's message requested that a political solution be suggested to the UN to get a ceasefire resolution passed.

***

The events were now moving at a very rapid pace. On the evening of 7 December, Maj. Gen. M. Rahim Khan, commanding 39 Ad hoc Division, asked for permission to relocate his forces and headquarters from Chandpur back to Dacca. The permission was granted. While crossing River Meghna, the boats carrying the headquarters personnel were attacked by Indian aircraft. The boats were badly damaged, a number of officers and civilians were killed, and many were wounded, including General Rahim.

The enemy had reached the banks of the Meghna River opposite Dacca; but only remnants of various units trekking back were being deployed on the home bank to defend it.

Maj. Gen. Nazar Hussain Shah, commanding 16 Division in Bogra Sector, had been ambushed by a detachment of

the enemy who had cut the Rangpur-Bogra main road, bypassing Hilli defences. The enemy forces consisted of tanks and infantry. Earlier reports indicated that the General was missing and, therefore, his replacement was required.

Maj. Gen. Jamshed Commander EPR was flown out to take over command of the division. He flew out during the night in a helicopter but could not locate the landing area since India had complete control over the airspace. He came back. Luckily, Nazar escaped capture and joined his forces safe and sound.

During Jamshed's absence, I was asked to fill in for him to command the EPR. I was horrified to note that no regular army units were available for the defence of Dacca. Except for pointing out this most dangerous shortfall to the Corps HQ, I could not do much as Jamshed returned to his command after an abortive attempt to land in the area of 16 Division. Thereafter, the Corps HQ tried to seek help from its subordinate formations by asking them to spare some troops for the defence of Dacca. However, without the resources for transportation, this could not be done.

In response to the governor's message of 7 December, a telex message was received from the president on the 8th. The message instructed the governor to continue the fight as the president was taking appropriate measures at the international level. The message also informed the governor that a high powered delegation was being rushed to New York to present Pakistan's case.

The word 'rushed' signalled that they had realized the gravity of the situation. Ironically, the delegation led

by Bhutto 'rushed' at a snail's pace to make sure that as much time was wasted as possible. Bhutto initially went to Kabul on 8 December by road—as if Kabul held a key to the solution; then he adopted the most zigzag route via Frankfurt, Rome, and London, to New York and reached on the 10th.

Whereas one gains twelve hours travelling towards the West, Bhutto's rushing took him sixty hours to get to New York, when he could have been there the same day. By the time he arrived in New York, many grave developments had taken place, Niazi's options had been minimized, and a political solution, therefore, became unavailable.

The operational situation had deteriorated as reflected in General Niazi's subsequent signals which he sent to the GHQ on 9 December:

### Signal No. G-1255—dated 9 December 1971

Contents: (A) regrouping readjustment is not possible due to enemy mastery of skies (B) population getting extremely hostile and providing all-out help to enemy (C) no move possible during night due to intensive rebel ambushes (D) rebels guiding enemy through gaps and rear (E) airfield damaged extensively cmm* no mission last three days and not possible in future (F) all jetties cmm ferries and river crafts destroyed due to enemy air action (G) bridges demolished by rebels (H) even extrication most difficult (I) (J) extensive damage to heavy weapons and equipment due enemy air action (K) troops fighting extremely well but stress and strain now telling hard (L) not slept for last 20 days (M) are

* cmm stands for comma.

under constant fire air artillery and tanks (N), (O) situation extremely critical cmm we will go on fighting and do our best (P) request following (Q) immediate strike all enemy air bases this theatre (R) if possible send reinforcement airborne troops for protection of Dacca.

It is not possible to imagine a more depressing situation than conveyed in the above signal. The commander, after painting a true state of the situation as extremely critical and his forces as tired, goes on to request reinforcements by airborne forces for the defence of Dacca. His request had received wide publicity and when Indian airborne troops later landed in the Tangail area, the Pakistan army mistook them for Chinese troops and went out to welcome them, and were taken prisoners.

### Signal No. G-1265—dated 10 December 1971

Contents: (A) all formations this command in every sector this theatre under extreme pressure (B) formations/troops mostly isolated in fortresses which initially invested by enemy cmm now under heavy attacks and may be liquidated due overwhelming strength of enemy (C) enemy possesses mastery of air and freedom to destroy all vehicles at will and with full concentration of effort (D) local population and rebels not only hostile but all-out to destroy own troops in entire area (E) all communication road/river out (F) orders to own troops issued to hold on last man last round which may not be too long due to very prolonged fighting cmm troops totally tired (G) anyway will

be difficult to hold on when weapons/ammunition get exhausted in the next few days (H) supplies/ ammunition also continue to be destroyed by enemy/ rebels actions besides intense rate battle expenditure (I) submitted for information and advice.

This signal is a clear indication of Niazi's acceptance of defeat. He states that his troops may not be able to fight for more than a few days more. When such a situation arises, speaking from a militarily perspective, it is the job of the politicians to minimize its damaging effects as much as possible. The higher up one goes, the more far-sighted one should be. The top leadership should have been able to foresee these things.

The governor thought that the situation demanded urgent political resolution—otherwise, the Eastern Command would face humiliation. Discussions were going on in the Security Council. It appeared from the speeches of our representative that we were asking for a simple ceasefire from the UN without offering any political solution.

At that time, most of the nations of the world were of the opinion that Bengalis should be given greater autonomy or at least promised some political opening to bring the war to an end. To get a ceasefire resolution passed by the Security Council, it was essential, in our opinion, to offer a political solution. Therefore, the governor presented the same request to the president on 9 December in a signal:

'Once again urge you to consider immediate ceasefire and political settlement'.

In response to this signal, the president sent the following:

> **FLASH Dated 092300 (9 December, 1100 hrs PM)**
> **FROM: HQ CMLA**
> **TO: GOVERNOR EAST PAKISTAN AND EASTERN COMMAND**
> **TOPSEC G-0001** (A) From President to Governor repeated to Eastern Command (B) your flash message A-4660 of 9 Dec received and thoroughly understood (B) you have my permission to take decision on your proposals to me (C) I have and am continuing to take all measures internationally but in view of our complete isolation from each other, I leave it entirely to your good sense and judgment (D) I will approve of any decision you take and I am instructing Gen. Niazi simultaneously to accept your decision and arrange things accordingly (E) Whatever efforts you take in your decision to save senseless destruction of the kind of civilians you have mentioned, in particular the safety of our armed forces, you may go ahead and ensure safety of armed forces by all political means that you will adopt with our opponent'.

From the above, it is apparent that the president of Pakistan clearly and in unambiguous terms gave authority to the governor to take any decision concerning East Pakistan in accordance with his good sense. The use of the word 'about' and not 'in' East Pakistan gives wider power to the governor. Certain other phrases are very significant: 'Save senseless destruction ... of civilians ... [and ensure] safety of armed forces by all political means'. These two

objectives could only be met by presenting a political solution to the United Nations along with the ceasefire request. For some unknown reason, the Government of Pakistan was unwilling to suggest a political solution to the UN. The use of the sentence, 'you may go ahead and ensure safety of armed forces by all political means that you will adopt with our opponent' meant that they wanted the governor to make the proposals to the UN, to avoid embarrassment to the central government.

The expression of desire to look after the safety of the armed forces hinted at suggestions to surrender. In my opinion, the armed forces are safe if they are fighting, a ceasefire brings an end to their fighting, or they have surrendered. Niazi's fighting capability was at a low as indicated in his two SOS signals quoted above. He had clearly expressed his conclusions by saying, 'Anyway it will be difficult to hold on when weapons/ammunition exhaust in the next few days.'

The next option was seeking a ceasefire through the UN. This, one could only get by offering a political solution. Our reading of the development of debates in the UN was that Pakistan's representative was reluctant to offer a political solution. Obviously, somebody was forcing their option, that of surrender, onto Niazi.

Simultaneously, a much more definite signal was sent by the army COS to Gen. Niazi. It is reproduced as follows:

**FROM: PAK ARMY DTG: 100910 FLASH**
**TO: EASTERN COMMAND TOP SECRET**

G-0237 for Comd from COS Army (A) President's signal message to governor copy to you refers (B)

president has left the decision to the governor in close consultation with you (C) as no signal can correctly convey the degree of seriousness of the situation I can only leave it to you to take the correct decision on the spot (D) it is however apparent that it is now only a question of time before the enemy with its great superiority in number and material and the active cooperation of rebels will dominate East Pakistan completely (E) meanwhile a lot of damage is being done to the civil population and the army is suffering heavy casualties (F) you will have to assess the value of fighting on if you can, and weigh it, based on which you should give your frank advice to the governor who will give his final decision as delegated to him by the president (G) whenever you feel it is necessary to do so you should attempt to destroy maximum military equipment so that it does not fall into enemy hands (H) keep me informed (I) Allah bless you.

Note the following sentences:

i. Rebels will dominate East Pakistan completely.
ii. Governor will give final decision as delegated to him by the president.
iii. A concealed, suggestive and cleverly worded phrase: 'whenever you feel it is necessary to do so (?) you should attempt to destroy maximum military equipment so that it does not fall into enemy hands'.

The use of the word[s] '[whenever you feel it is necessary to do] so' made the orders vague. When does one destroy equipment? The answer is, when one surrenders. Therefore,

the word[s] '[whenever you feel it is necessary to do] so' meant surrender. The GHQ was suggesting that with the governor's approval, you may surrender. This was on the 10th.

The above two signals were masterfully worded. The whole intention was to place the responsibility for surrender on the governor and the commander in East Pakistan. If and when the occasion arose, the rulers in Islamabad could go on ruling in West Pakistan by blaming the governor and commander for the East Pakistan debacle.

The governor, hard-pressed from the civilian side, wanted an end to the fighting with honour. The situation in the areas which were continuously being overrun by the Indian Army and the Mukti Bahini was unimaginably terrible for the friends of Pakistan. Prominent Bengalis who had supported Pakistan were butchered, and their properties were looted. Biharis had no place to hide. They were hunted down like pie-dogs and brutally executed.

Given more time, the atrocious killings were to become even more widespread. The governor was heartbroken and miserable, but his mind was still active. As the responsibility to find a political arrangement had been delegated to him, he thought to try for a ceasefire instead of surrendering. Consequently, he sent the following signal (to be sent to the UNO) to the president for approval:

**FROM: GOVERNOR EAST PAKISTAN TOP SECRET**

**TO: HQ CMLA A-7107**

For President of Pakistan (A) your G-0001 of 092300 dec (B) as the responsibility of taking the final and

fateful decision has been given to me I am handing over the following note to Assistant Secretary General Paul-Marc Henry after your approval (C) Note begins (1) It was never the intention of the Armed Forces of Pakistan to involve themselves in all-out war on the soil of East Pakistan (2) However a situation arose which compelled the Armed Forces to take defensive action (3) The intention of the Government of Pakistan was always to decide the issues in East Pakistan by means of a political solution for which negotiations were afoot (4) The Armed Forces have fought heroically against heavy odds and can still continue to do so but in order to avoid further bloodshed and loss of innocent lives I am making the following proposals (5) As the conflict arose as a result of political causes, it must end with a political solution (6) I therefore having been authorized by the President of Pakistan do hereby call upon the elected representative of East Pakistan to arrange for the peaceful formation of the government in Dacca (7) In making this offer I feel duty bound to say the will of the people of East Pakistan would demand the immediate vacation of their land by the Indian forces as well (8) I therefore call upon the United Nations to arrange for a peaceful transfer of power and request (9) (One) an immediate ceasefire (Two) repatriation with honour of the Armed Forces of Pakistan to West Pakistan (Three) repatriation of all West Pakistan personnel desirous of returning to West Pakistan (Four) the safety of all persons settled in East Pakistan since 1947 (Five) guarantee of no reprisals against any person in East Pakistan (Six)

In making this offer, I want to make it clear that this is a definite proposal for peaceful transfer of power (Seven) The question of surrender of Armed Forces would not be considered and does not arise and if this proposal is not accepted the Armed Forces will continue to fight to the last man. Note ends (D) Gen. Niazi has been consulted and submits himself to your command.

Note the following:

i. This suggestion that the conflict must end with a political solution.
ii. The political solution offered was the peaceful formation of the government in Dacca by the elected representatives of East Pakistan.
iii. The armed forces were not to surrender.

Both signals, one from the president and the other from COS General Hamid, were received by the governor at night. Chief Secretary to the Governor Muzaffar Hussain, along with all other secretaries belonging to West Pakistan, had moved into the Governor House. The governor and Muzaffar Hussain came to my office in the Governor House on the morning of 10 December and showed me the above quoted signal, which the governor proposed be sent to the president. The draft had been prepared by Muzaffar Hussain. The governor asked us to take the signal to Niazi and get his approval.

The India Air Force was very active over Dacca, making movement by road hazardous. There were plenty of Mukti Bahini guerrillas operating in the city through which we

had to pass to cover the seven miles to the Corps HQ. We had no military escort and made our way, taking cover from one place to another.

We reached the Corps HQ and found all the important people with Gen. Niazi—he had stopped holding briefing sessions; instead, there were get-together meetings. Present were Admiral Sharif, General Jamshed, and Brig Baqar Siddiqui, COS Corps. Muzaffar handed over the draft signal to Gen. Niazi who had it read out to all. Then, he asked for opinions. Gen. Jamshed and Admiral Sharif endorsed the suggestion saying, 'we have no other option.' 'In what capacity of mine are you asking for any approval?' asked Gen. Niazi. I said, 'In your capacity as Theatre Commander East Command'. 'OK—you have my approval,' he replied.

We both left for the Governor House separately. Muzaffar had to go somewhere else and I got back to the Governor House alone with the approved signal. I found the governor and Paul-Marc Henry, UN Special Representative, waiting for us. I told the governor that Gen. Niazi had approved the signal. The governor asked me to hand over a copy to Paul-Marc Henry. Since I was the only army staff officer available in the Governor House at that time, I signed the letter before handing it over to him (a signal message to be transmitted over the army communication system requires the signature of an army officer). It may be pertinent to mention that signatures of a staff officer are never taken to mean that the communication is from him. The communication was from the governor to the president, and not me. But I agreed

with the proposals, as their acceptance would have saved us from the humiliation of surrender.

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Life in Dacca had come to a complete halt. Curfew had been imposed to counter the activities of Mukti Bahini inside the city. The infiltration of guerrillas continued despite roadblocks. There was no government in effect at the moment, as Bengali personnel at all levels were involved in resistance to the established government of Pakistan—some overtly, others covertly. Under such circumstances, the only honourable course open was as indicated in the governor's signal: to ensure that surrender is avoided.

# 12

# Synopsis and Analysis of Operations

## KHULNA–JESSORE–JHENAIDAH SECTOR

9 DIVISION (UNDER GOC MAJ. GEN. ANSARI) WITH TWO INFANTRY brigades (57 Brigade commanded by Brig. Manzur and 107 Brigade commanded by Brig. Hayat) was deployed too far out in this sector. The Corps HQ ignored the GOC's requests to let them fall back and laughed off the reasons he gave. The development of 9 Division operations were:

**Pre-hostilities Period:** On 20 November, Indians captured Gharibpur village about three miles inside Pakistan. 6 Punjab, supported by a few tanks, counter-attacked, but the attack was repulsed. Most of the tanks were destroyed. PAF supporting the attack lost two aircraft due to inferior combat planes. 38FF withdrew on the night between the 21st and the 22nd from Chuagacha. On 4 December, general hostilities started.

**Jessore Sub-Sector:** The enemy attacked 6 Punjab with a brigade that had aerial and tank supported at about 10 a.m. on 6 December. At 4 p.m., 6 Punjab informed the brigade HQ of a breach in the northern flanks. Instead of falling back to River Madhumati

as planned, the brigade under Brig. Hayat withdrew towards Khulna, leaving Jessore undefended. Jessore fell on the 7th as one captain with a few men continued to fight for 24 hours. Pakistan Radio gave the news on 9 December.

**Jhenaidah Sub-Sector:** 57 Brigade, consisting of two battalions, was attacked by the 4th Indian Mountain Division on 24 November. Jibannagar fell three days later on the 27th. The enemy could not clear Darsana, but wide gaps remained and with the help of the Mukti Bahini, it established a roadblock towards the rear of the Chuagacha-Jhenaidah road. 57 Brigade could not clear it and thus a major portion of it had to move out of their operational area to the north. After crossing the Jamuna, the brigade entered the 16 Division's area east of Rajshahi. Remnants staggered behind the Madhumati, where 9 Division HQ had already moved from Jessore.

Thus, through 6 and 7 December, 9 Division had ceased to exist as a fighting formation. However, it was able to put up a show of force, deceiving the opposing commander who did not take the risk of crossing the Madhumati. 9 Division had disintegrated as a command but its individual officers and *jawans* displayed exceptional courage and performed individual acts of bravery which have been recognized by the enemy as well.

Why did Brig. Hayat fall on Khulna and not on the Madhumati? This was contrary to the order of his own GOC Ansari. The fact is, Gen. Niazi gave the order directly to Brig. Hayat so he could secure Khulna port for the

6 Fleet, which was supposedly coming to help him. This was an unsound manoeuvre as it exposed Dacca to the enemy. There was only one company, two 3.7-in guns, and 9 Division HQ between the enemy and Dacca. What a risk to take!

## RANGPUR–BOGRA–RAJSHAHI SECTOR

16 Division, under GOC Maj. Gen. Nazar Hussain, was charged with the defence of this sector. It had 23, 34, and 205 Brigades. Using the Hilli Salient, the enemy bypassed most of the fortresses and managed to cut this division into two. Erecting a roadblock on the main Rangpur-Bogra road, the enemy ambushed the GOC, but he narrowly escaped.

This division had one armour regiment under command equipped with vintage, Second World War era 24 mm guns. These tanks were no match against PT76 and M59/M60 tanks of the enemy. At the time of surrender, the division had lost cohesion as a fighting formation, though its individual battalions were intact, as opposed to that of the other division. Commanding 205 Brigade Brigadier Tajammal's performance was exceptionally praiseworthy.

## SYLHET–BRAHMANBARIA SECTOR

14 Division under GOC Maj. Gen. Qazi Majeed was charged with the defence of this sector. The division had 27 and 313 Brigades.

**Pre-hostilities Period:** Jantipur, Radha Nagar, and Shamsheer Nagar had fallen before the general war began. By 2 December, our troops had fallen back on Maulvi Bazaar. 313 Brigade was ordered to go

to Sherpur and finally to Sylhet, where it remained till the end. The troops in Sylhet could not play any part nor could they influence the battle in any way.

**Brahmanbaria-Astagram Sector:** 27 Brigade under Brig. Saadullah fought bravely but was outnumbered and had to fall back successively from Akhora-Kasba to Brahmanbaria on the night between 4 and 5 December. On 5 December, Brahmanbaria was threatened and evacuated the same night. The brigade fought a good battle at Astagram till the night of 9 and 10 December, when it crossed over to Bhairab. This was a bad move as Bhairab had a water channel on the southern side as well. While it provided a sanctuary to the division HQ and 27 Brigade, they were out of the battle for the defence of East Pakistan. The enemy was able to cross unhindered at Narsingdi on 11 December and advance on to Dacca without any threat from 14 Division to its flank in the north.

Briefly stating, the 14 Division's defences were torn apart within 48 hours of the start of the all-out war on 4 December. By the 6th, the division ceased to exist as an entity. One brigade fell on Sylhet, while the other on Brahmanbaria. By the 12th, the entire territory within the boundaries of this division had been captured by the enemy except for the town of Sylhet, which was isolated and ineffective.

## SOUTHERN SECTOR (CHANDPUR COMILLA)

39 Ad hoc Division under GOC Maj. Gen. M. Rahim Khan was located at this sector. The division had 53 Brigade

commanded by Brigadier Niazi in Laksham-Feni and 117 Brigade commanded by Brigadier Atif in Comilla.

The Division had been created by Gen. Niazi to deceive the enemy. In actual fact, this move broke formations and led to a lack of command and control due to communication problems. The deployment of Brigadier Niazi's 53 Brigade was faulty, as it had eyeball contact with the enemy and was spread out in a linear formation to defend an indefensible road.

The enemy attacked on the eve of the 5th, and with the help of the Mukti Bahini, established themselves towards the rear by capturing Hajiganj. 53 Brigade moved to Laksham that night.

Confusion prevailed in the area, with reports of surrender by battalion commanders. Laksham was abandoned, along with guns and the wounded. The battalions dispersed, surrendering here and there on their way to Chandpur, which had already been vacated by 39 Division HQ on 8 December.

On their way to Dacca, the boats, carrying 39 Divisional Headquarters, were attacked by Indian aircraft. Lt Col. Qureshi GSO-1 of the division and ten others were killed, while its GOC Maj. Gen. Rahim was wounded. 39 Division ceased to exist on the eve of the 9th, with the garrison under Brig. Atif at Comilla surrounded.

## SUMMARY OF OPERATIONAL EVENTS: EASTERN COMMAND

### Western and North Western Sectors

*9 Division*—By 7 December, events had taken an

ominous turn for the Eastern Command. Jessore and Jhenidah had fallen and 9 Division stood disintegrated.

*16 Division*—The division had been cut into two with the GOC isolated.

### Eastern Sector

*14 Division*—Sylhet garrison had been isolated. 14 Division had vacated Brahmanbaria and the Indians were threatening Astagram-Bhairab Bazaar.

*39 Ad hoc Division*—The defence of 39 Ad hoc Division had been ripped apart and the division HQ had been permitted to abandon Chandpur. Two of its battalions had disintegrated. Thus, the entire Eastern Command had disintegrated within three to four days of the start of the all-out war.

*Eastern Command*: By 9 December, the situation seemed hopeless to the commander of the Eastern Command. He informed the GHQ of the critical situation by saying that he could fight only for a few more days. He had suffered a military defeat.

There is no doubt that the army in East Pakistan had to fight under the most adverse conditions. Due to political mishandling, the majority of the population of East Pakistan had turned against the army. The militant support of Mukti Bahini provided the Indian Army with tremendous advantage to its mobility and manoeuvrability on the flanks and to the rear of the Pakistan Army. Yet, the war could have been prolonged had Niazi followed the original concept of mobile defence.

## OVERALL MILITARY SITUATION—10 DEC. 1971

### 9 Division

Jessore was abandoned on 6 December. Brig. Muhammad Hayat's 107 Brigade withdrew towards Khulna instead of falling on Magura and behind the Madhumati. Brigadier Manzur's 57 Brigade crossed the Ganges into 16 Division area and remained isolated. It was ordered to come to Dacca but could not reach because there were no boats—the Mukti Bahini had taken them all away. The only two brigades of the 9 Division were separated by seventy-five miles, resulting in only two companies and the division HQ left between the enemy and Dacca.

### 16 Division

The Rangpur-Bogra road was cut near Pirganj by the enemy on 7 December, thereby splitting the division in two. Divisional headquarters moved to Natore and remained out of battle and ineffective till the end of the war. All brigades fought isolated battles, defending their own positions.

### 36 Ad hoc Division

This division only had two regular battalions, 33 Punjab and 31 Baloch. The two approaches from Jamalpur and Mymensingh to Dacca were looked after by a battalion each. After heroic battles at the border, the withdrawal was disorganized. All semblance of command dispersed after the enemy airdrop in area Tangail. Whoever got back to Dacca as a straggler was in bad shape. Remnants of forces from various sectors were organized for the defence of Dacca.

### 14 Division

27 Brigade crossed over Bhairab Bazaar on 10 December. As there was a waterway south of it, the brigade became isolated and ineffective for war in East Pakistan. It was safe where it was, but could not provide support for the defence of Dacca.

313 Brigade moved to Sylhet. It stayed there, with 202 Brigade—an ad hoc brigade with one battalion only. The isolated fortress of Sylhet was not disturbed by the Indians, as it could play no part in the war anymore.

### 39 Ad hoc Division

Two companies and Bn HQ surrendered on the first night between 4 and 5 December. 27 Punjab and 21 AK surrendered on 10 December. Maj. Gen. Rahim withdrew his headquarters from Chandpur to Dacca on 8 December. 523 Brigade was dispersed all over the countryside. One of its battalions lost the way and surrendered to the enemy.

Comilla Garrison was bypassed. 117 Brigade kept holding onto the cantonment area only. The city had fallen to the enemy earlier. The enemy had reached Dand Kundi and Chandpur, and all of our troops in this sector had either surrendered, been dispersed or killed.

## EASTERN COMMAND

By changing the concept of operations for the defence of East Pakistan, Lt Gen. Niazi sowed the seeds of disaster. The plan he had created was completely out of tune with the existing operational environment. No sooner had the Indian offensive unfolded that the weakness of the plan

started becoming apparent and commanders at all levels were unable to obey the no-withdrawal orders issued by the Corps HQ.

With wide fronts, thin defences, and overwhelming enemy superiority in numbers and firepower, the concept of fortresses leading to rigid defence could not succeed. This only led to disorganized retreats. With the exception of a number of instances of valour, courage, and dedication, the conduct of this war is a sad story, full of panic, chaos, confusion, and flaws, which resulted in the capitulation of East Pakistan.

During the initial phase of the Indian offensive, from 20 November to 3 December, the commander of the Eastern Command failed to comprehend the impending danger and stuck to the redundant idea of not losing even an inch of territory. He failed to redeploy his forces based purely on military considerations and, instead, continued to maintain a forward posture.

The troops suffered heavy casualties in their efforts to recapture the areas occupied by the enemy along the border during their preliminary operations. Even on 3 December, when Gen. Niazi was directed by the GHQ to 'redeploy the force in accordance with the operational task', he did not order readjustment of positions, with the result that the forward defence started crumbling fast from 5 December onwards.

The meagre reserves available at the commencement of hostilities were committed piecemeal. The battalions that arrived in November from West Pakistan were also distributed amongst the divisions in bits and pieces. No effort was made to create any reserves worth the name

at any stage during the war. Thus, without reserves, the commander Eastern Command could not influence the course of events. He had no reserves at Dacca and, thus committed a breach of higher command orders.

The conduct of our defensive battle also suffered mainly because of the lack of a realistic overall tactical concept. A concept of defence based on fortresses and strong point system's successful implementation depends on having mobile reserves and air parity, if not superiority, to enable the reserves to move to put in counter-attacks. There were neither enough troops, nor mobile armoured forces, nor air to justify adoption of fortress defence.

The only defensive concept which could succeed was to trade space for time to achieve the mission of keeping the forces in being. The successive lines of defence, if contemplated, were not spelt out and the time frame for fighting at each line was not issued to the formations.

Thus, there was no flexibility in the plan to start with, and the formation commander's initiative was curbed when on 27 November the Eastern Command issued the impractical order of 'no withdrawal unless 75 per cent casualties are suffered'. This illogical order had serious repercussions, although, when all-out war started, not a single formation or unit obeyed nor could obey this order.

Eastern Command failed to take adequate steps for the defence of Dacca as the reserve brigade earmarked to be located in the area was moved out to the Feni-Laksham area. When the situation deteriorated on all fronts and the magnitude of threat to Dacca was realized, it was too late to reroute troops from the front line to Dacca. Frantic messages were sent to 9 Division and 16 Division to spare some troops for Dacca.

As Manzur's brigade had crossed across its area of operation and was in the area of Pabna, it could be spared, but without ferries and air control, no move was possible. Thus, on 12 December, when the Indians broke through Mymensingh–Tangail supported by para drops, and in the East in area Narsingdi by helicopter-lifted troops, there was practically no viable fighting formation in Dacca. Dacca defence was manned by East Pakistan Rifles and the withdrawing and worn-out troops stagger back to Dacca from various sectors.

The Higher Command at the GHQ and the president's headquarters lacked sense of direction, political sagacity and sound military judgment. They were not clear about the national aim and had not developed any national strategy to achieve the objective.

Military strategy flows from national strategy and the reliability of the latter is essential for the correct execution of the former. In other words, if national strategy is bankrupt, military means alone cannot deliver the goods. In this case, a military solution was being sought without any clear political objective.

The political bungling culminated in military action in March 1971, which sowed the seeds for the military debacle of December 1971. It is a well-known maxim of war that the armed forces of a country should be launched under as much of a favourable condition as the government can create. In the case of East Pakistan, we saw the armed forces operating under the most adverse circumstances which one could imagine—a hostile population, an army far away from its base, difficult terrain, far superior enemy in number and firepower with mastery of the skies, no

hope of relief or development of promising conditions on the West Pakistan front, and above all an unfavourable world opinion.

India, on the other hand, by meticulously using diplomatic, political, economic, and psychological means, had created a most favourable environment for unleashing her military might on 21 and 22 November.

# 13

## The Inevitable

ON THE MORNING OF 11 DECEMBER, MR POPUS, THE CONSUL-General of the USSR, came to see me. He said that the proposals given in the governor's signal were acceptable to his government. When I asked him how he knew about the proposals, he said everybody in the diplomatic corps knew and showed me a copy of it. I inquired whether the message indicating acceptance was from Moscow. He replied with an affirmative.

Then I asked whether their ambassador in Islamabad had conveyed the message from Moscow to our Foreign Office. He responded with another affirmative. I told him that if it was so, there was nothing more that the governor could do. He agreed. Then he said, 'May I make a personal suggestion? The Mukti Bahini are going to kill you. I have a special room prepared for you. Come and stay in that. We will get you out of Dacca safely.' I thanked him for the offer but apologized for not being able to accept it. 'My fate is with the rest of my people,' I declared. He left with the offer remaining open. I had no intention of accepting such an offer. I rejected asylum offers from other Bengali friends as well.

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General Peerzada rang me up at 9 a.m. on 11 December

and said, 'The governor's proposal has been approved with a minor amendment. We are sending the amended draft to you.' When the draft arrived later that day, the amendment was the deletion of the political solution clause. The rest had been approved.

The amended telex was also transmitted to the UN. Without the political clause, the proposal had no strength, but the approval meant that the president had no objection to the governor approaching the UN directly and to the withdrawal of West Pakistani forces, after political negotiations and a settlement, if required.

But, we heard over the radio that the president disclaimed any responsibility for the signal. The signal was attributed to me and the government announced that Farman was not authorized to send such a message to the UN. The facts had been distorted. It was true—Farman was not authorized. But the governor was authorized and he sent the signal with the concurrence of Niazi, and not Farman.

No mention of this fact was made, and the whole drama was staged to fool the nation. The plan was to lay the blame on others and to stay in power. This was an ignoble and ruthless campaign to divert the wrath of the nation onto those who could not defend themselves. The whole drama was staged to cover up their misdeeds and evil intentions.

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After Maghrib prayers on 12 December 1971, I entered a room where the civil administrators were staying in the Governor House. I saw a number of them sitting around

two foreign correspondents. The civil administrators were clarifying their positions to them by saying, 'We did not volunteer to be posted to East Pakistan. We were forced to come here. We only obeyed orders. We have committed no atrocities. Whatever has been done has been done by the army.' The foreigners were nodding patronizingly, perhaps smiling within.

I also saw a couple of them on the telephone. They were talking to their families in Karachi. No harm in that, but they were crying on the telephone—depicting the most dismal conditions in Dacca.

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The sounds of the enemy's gun had for the first time been heard in Dacca as they were closing in. The army could not provide protection and all were likely to be butchered by the Mukti Bahini. I intervened and explained to the correspondents that East Pakistan was not a separate country. Pakistan was one, and a civil and military officer could be posted by the central government wherever required.

I told them that we had every right to defend our country, and East Pakistan was as much our country as that of the Bengalis. I had to behave authoritatively because everyone around me was falling apart. I had to put on a brave face. This resulted in the foreign press portraying me as the most powerful man in East Pakistan. In actual fact, there was no power in the office of the governor, let alone in his staff officer.

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The next morning, I came to the office at 7:30 a.m. as usual. There were a few visitors, including representatives from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the UN Relief Commission. I was most worried about leading members of the public who had remained loyal and who would be sure targets of the Mukti Bahini.

The Mukti Bahini's modus operandi was quite clear. In all the areas which had come under the Indian Army, the accompanying Muktis had killed people most brutally—cutting them from to limb to limb, stabbing them with spears and swords, gouging out their eyes, and committing other heinous acts.

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I had requested the ICRC to establish an international zone by taking over Hotel Intercontinental. They were under no obligation but did so out of benevolence. The ICRC head of mission wanted a few signatures which I put down so that, when required, all those who wished to seek refuge could enter the hotel and be protected by the international law governing such zones.

The UN representative informed me that if there was a ceasefire agreement, they could mobilize enough manpower to supervise and monitor its implementation for three or four days till the UN made alternate arrangements. I expressed my gratitude but told him that only the governor or the president could take such decisions. This event, however, required close coordination, which my office could undertake.

While we were discussing this, the telephone rang. It was Maj. Gen. M. Rahim Khan at the other end. I was

surprised to find out that he was calling from my residence, which was within the compound of the Governor House. 'Could you come over? I want to talk to you,' he said.

I walked across to my hut, which had two entrances. As I entered, I saw Niazi and Jamshed walking in through the other door. Rahim had invited them for a discussion as well. I entered the bedroom before the others who had a longer distance to cover.

Rahim had been wounded while on his way back from Chandpur in a motorboat. He was admitted at the CMH, which was on the outskirts of Dacca Cantonment (I went to see him twice but found him asleep both times as he was highly sedated). He thought the CMH was not safe and had shifted to my house. I asked him how he was and also the purpose of his call. He said it appeared that seeking a ceasefire was the only course left.

Niazi and Jamshed entered the room, shook hands and began talking with Rahim. As Rahim was now my guest, I went to the next room to ensure that my servant had provided the necessities for his stay and prepared food for the two of us. I returned after a couple of minutes. It appeared that the three had talked about asking the authorities in Rawalpindi to arrange for an honourable end to the war. As I was not involved in the conduct of the battle, I kept quiet. The session lasted only a few minutes, after which Niazi and Jamshed left. After making sure that Rahim was comfortable, I went back to my office.

Fifteen minutes later, Niazi entered my office alone. He had never visited my office before, and I was surprised to see him there. 'Send that from here,' he said. I realized he was referring to the ceasefire message—he wanted it sent

from the governor's office. By now, I had understood his game. Having lost the war, he wanted to place the entire responsibility on the Governor House. 'I am not sending that message from here,' I said.

I had hardly finished my sentence when Muzaffar Hussain entered. 'What is the matter?' he enquired. I told him that the General wanted to send a message. To Gen. Niazi he said, 'come with me, sir,' and took him away. After about an hour, the military secretary rang me up and said the message was ready for a signature. I told him that I was not approving or signing any message sponsored by Niazi. That was the end of that. The message was never sent.[30]

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At about 11 a.m. on 13 December, the Indian Air Force launched an attack on the Governor House (they claimed to have hit my office, which they did, but only managed to slightly damage a pillar). I went outside, where I was joined by Khawaja Khairuddin and others. The Indian planes had turned around and were diving towards the Governor House.

I shouted to all, telling them to lie down flat on the ground. I kept standing, but under a tree. The rockets hit the reception hall where the Indians claimed a conference was underway. A meeting had been scheduled, but was postponed. But the Indian's claim showed how much they knew. After the raid, Khawaja Khairuddin asked me why I had not taken cover. 'I am wearing the uniform of a general; I could not show to the others that I was afraid,' I said.

The library had caught fire but the military secretary

was taking care it, calling the fire brigade and taking other protective measures. The governor called a few of us and said that as Islamabad was not listening to his advice, he was resigning. He left the Governor House and took refuge in the underground shelter prepared for such emergencies.

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I was now for the, second time, left without a job, as there was no governor. The chief secretary, provincial secretaries, and civilian staff of the Governor House left to seek refuge and protection in the Intercontinental under the ICRC. I went back to my hut. I was surprised to find that General Rahim was not there. He had left immediately after the air raid. I looked around. The Governor House looked deserted. What was I to do? I could go to the ICRC international zone, but that would not be an act commensurate with my position. I decided to go to the cantonment and be with the army.

In the cantonment, I found a room vacant in the house of the administrative commandant. I left my things there and reported to the corps headquarters. I was assigned no duty to perform. From noon on 13 December till 16 December, I had no appointment, no responsibility, and no authority. I was just an individual who could give orders only to his orderly. I attended conferences, expressed opinions, and gave advice when called for, but most of the time I was ignored.

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I visited the Governor House on the 14th as well. I found

that due to the Indian Air Force rocket attack on the main conference hall of the Governor House, burning windows and doors had fallen inwards. I noticed a smouldering piece of wood touching the red carpet. Knowing that this would be the residence of a future head of state of a Muslim country, I, with my hands and feet, put out the fire and pushed it away from the susceptible areas, probably saving the Governor House from further damage.

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The chief secretary, along with other provincial secretaries who were from West Pakistan and were seconded to the government of East Pakistan, had found it unsafe to stay in their allotted bungalows and shifted to the Governor House. They found it impossible to perform their functions and stopped going to the deserted offices in the Secretariat.

No civil government existed after 6 December 1971. When the Indian Air Force bombed the city, there were no civic agencies available to clear the roads or attend to the injured and wounded persons. The only place where one could see some activity was the Intercontinental Hotel where a number of correspondents of the international press were staying. Dacca was a ghost city. Most of the time it was under curfew, out of fear of Mukti Bahini activities. Most of the pro-Pakistan elements were panicking now, be they East or West Pakistani.

The Mukti Bahini had established a secret office in Dacca—it could have even been in the office of a provincial secretary who could be working for the Mukti Bahini. Most of the prominent individuals were contacted via

telephone or through letters by the Muktis, threatening them with execution if they helped the 'occupation forces'.

Civilian officials aside, even some of the army officers were scared. They were expecting a massacre by the Mukti Bahini. Many officers and men asked me why I was getting them ground into mincemeat. 'Please do something,' they implored. Those who had committed crimes were particularly more panicky.

The Mukti Bahini had declared that they would avenge what they called the genocide of the people of East Pakistan. The pressure of both the public and the deteriorating military situation was on the higher commanders and on the governor. Something had to be done.

General Niazi had without any shadow of a doubt, become unhinged. His conscience was not clear and his actions had been less than pure; he feared his nemesis. He had lost all his vulgar humour and loud boasts. People saw him weep in his office as well.

With fronts collapsing throughout his command, the army could not provide a solution. It had to be a political one, and only the central government in Islamabad and its representative at the UN could provide that solution. The honour of the nation was at stake. The armed forces could escape the disgrace of surrender if a reasonable and politically acceptable resolution had been presented to the UN.

But that was not in consonance with the scheme the aspirants of absolute power in West Pakistan had prepared. Only the army's defeat could fully ensure the possibility of absolute power. National honour and interest faded out of view as the mad quest for unshared power became the primary objective of the ambitious power seekers.

Even the Polish Resolution, which provided for ceasefire and a political solution, was torn to pieces by the leader of our delegation at the UN. All doors for a settlement, short of surrender, were shut to ensure humiliation of the army and clear the way to absolute power. A boastful declaration of carrying on the war for a thousand years was made, which ensured the ignominious fate of the armed forces in East Pakistan.

They were not interested in saving East Pakistan because with East Pakistan as part of Pakistan, the one-man-one-vote formula would give it the chance and the right to rule over the whole of Pakistan—a situation that would have jeopardized the plan of the 'powers of the future' in their quest for absolute and unimpeded power.

If the proposals contained in the governor's signal or the Polish Resolution had been accepted, the sequence of events could have been somewhat like this: a UN resolution asking for ceasefire would have been adopted, which would have been followed by negotiations to ensure the proposals were implemented.

We were sure that the UN would have passed the resolution as it contained a political clause to resolve the conflict in East Pakistan. The Indians would have accepted it because they did not know the extent of our military weakness in Dacca, and were expecting an unacceptable level of casualties to their forces in trying to capture it. The Bengalis would have welcomed a political solution under the changed conditions, on that was both desirable and would not end in Indian occupation.

After the ceasefire, the Pakistan Army would have had the time and opportunity to regroup and redeploy. The

Central Government of Pakistan could then decide on the strategy to be adopted. The Indians in 1948 had acquired a ceasefire in Kashmir and they are still in occupation of the territory. A UN resolution does not necessarily mean that each of its contents is to be implemented. Negotiations are drawn-out and the situation can be handled after ceasefire.

And, most important of all, surrender would have been avoided. The Centre, after blocking all efforts for a political settlement, told Niazi that he could surrender. This was only three days after the governor's signal seeking a ceasefire had been countermanded.

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Brigadier Baqar, COS Corps circulated the signal in the morning conference of 14 December. Admiral Sharif, General Jamshed, and AVM Inam, were also present. Admiral Sharif said that the president had given permission, not an order. Supporting him here, I added, 'You should not surrender en-masse, i.e. the whole theatre. You have the permission; pass this permission on to the divisional commanders. Continue to fight and let local divisional commanders decide individually when to call a halt to fighting.' Niazi listened and said, 'I will contact COS Army and get a clarification.'[31]

At around 5 p.m., he told us that he had checked with the GHQ and they wanted him to surrender. Then he told us how and with what difficulty he had gotten through and tried to speak over the phone with either Hamid or Yahya but the only person he could talk to was Air Marshal Rahim, who was drunk, and who conveyed the president's message that the situation in West Pakistan was bad and he was to surrender.

After relating the message to us, he asked me to accompany him to the US Consul General to seek his help in arranging surrender. I said, 'I am not going with you because I am against surrender. I was for a political settlement but the time for that has long gone.' He pleaded. Whatever he may say now, and however bold he may pretend to be, at the time, his condition was pathetic. He was helplessly seeking support from anyone who he thought could help.

I thought for a moment about the lives and destiny of 45,000 armed forces personnel and the millions of pro-Pakistan civilians involved. Perhaps I could help. Perhaps I could negotiate an honourable settlement; one often has a bloated opinion of oneself. I agreed to go with him.

When we reached the US Consul General's office, he left me and his ADC outside. Since the door was ajar, we could hear him pleading with the US consul general. He sought his help as a friend. 'Why did you to start the war?' the Consul General questioned. 'The US cannot help you. The most I can do is to convey your message to the Indians. I can act as a communicator, not a negotiator,' he said. 'We have a worldwide communication system that could transmit your message to whomever and wherever you want. Give me a written message,' he added.[32]

The message was prepared and handed over to the Consul General, signed by General Niazi. The CG asked me to authenticate it, which I did (as per the US system, authenticating the signature is a requirement). It was not a joint or agreed communication. According to the British system, which is also the system in Pakistan, a commander's signatures are not authenticated and he

is considered to be solely and wholly responsible for his decisions, orders, and communication.

Given the difference in systems, confusion arose when the world media played it up by projecting it as a joint civil and military authority decision. In hindsight, that may have been how Niazi wanted it projected. In reality, no civil authority existed at the time, and since the governor had resigned a day earlier, as his staff officer, I too ceased to have any authority whatsoever. My signature was merely as witness.

The message envisaged (a) ceasefire; (b) negotiations to let the Pakistan Army assemble in selected areas; (c) repatriation of West Pakistan elements of the Pakistan Army to West Pakistan along with their weapons. Surrender was not considered an option. Subsequently, a request was made for a negotiating team to come to Dacca.[33]

Upon our return to the cantonment, I was told that my presence was no longer required and that the COS Corps would handle further developments.

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On 16 December, I went to the Corps HQ at around 8:30 a.m. I was told that General Sam Manekshaw had replied with a conditional offer of ceasefire up to a certain time, after which the Indian Army would restart the offensive. The Pakistan Army was required to surrender before the advancing Indian Army. Just then, a sortie of the IAF appeared over the command headquarters. There was a commotion. 'The Indians are violating the ceasefire agreement,' the officers exclaimed. They asked

me if I could do something about it. Luckily, a UN officer appeared. I asked him to find out what had gone wrong with the understanding and also to get the ceasefire time extended from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. He got through to Delhi and got confirmation of the new arrangements.

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An hour after I came to the corps headquarters, a chit arrived. It was a message from an Indian general, Gandharv Nagra, to General Niazi saying that he was at Mirpur Brigade, i.e. at the outskirts. He wanted someone who had the authority to come and see him. He praised Niazi's decision to bring a halt to the senseless fighting. How Nagra had reached Dacca puzzled everybody but that adequately revealed the state of Dacca's defences.

Brigadier Baqar handed over this small piece of paper to Niazi, who after reading it and without uttering a single word, handed it over to me. Admiral Sharif and I read it. Still thinking that the originally suggested sequence given in our telex to Manekshaw was being followed (according to which there was to be a ceasefire, followed by negotiations, culminating in an agreement to enable the Pakistan Army to assemble in agreed areas), asked Niazi whether this General was part of the negotiating team.

Nobody knew exactly how he had arrived with troops so close to Dacca. Obviously, he was not the negotiator. I then asked Niazi what his potential to resist was. Since I was not in the command channel, I was not aware of the strength of Dacca's defences and it was important to know for the sake of negotiations. If resistance can be sustained during negotiations, one can negotiate better.

General Niazi kept silent as he had remained for the last three days. I repeated my question, but was again met with silence. At that, Admiral Sharif asked in Punjabi: '*kuch palley hai*?' (have you got anything in your kitty?).[34] Niazi looked towards Jamshed, Commander Dacca, who shook his head. On that, I said, 'I can't give any advice. Go and do whatever you want to do.' General Niazi told Jamshed to go and meet the Indian General. He put his cap on and left.

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A message arrived from Calcutta the same day which said that their negotiating team under General J. F. R. Jacob would be arriving around noon. We were told to disperse and meet again at the given time; the corps HQ was to look after their reception. As I was not holding any office or appointment, I went back to my room.

On returning to the corps command post around noon, I found it deserted. Wondering what had happened and thinking that perhaps there was some delay in the arrival of the negotiating team, I sat and waited. A little while later, an officer appeared. I asked him where the commander and others had gone. 'They are showing the Indians the corps headquarter's furniture and curtains,' he said in a sarcastic and disapproving tone.

Upon entering the peacetime corps headquarters building, I was surprised to see the Indian Army detachment outside. It transpired that General Jamshed had allowed them to enter Dacca. I thought this was the end of a meaningful discussion with the Indians. How could one negotiate with enemy troops around? In actual fact it meant that Dacca Garrison had already surrendered.

As I entered General Niazi's office, I was horrified by what I saw. General Niazi was sitting in his chair; in front of him was General Nagra. Also present was 'Tiger' Siddiqui of the Mukti Bahini, in a general's uniform. Niazi was in a jovial mood, reciting Urdu couplets. I saluted and took a chair by Admiral Sharif's side. Niazi was heard asking Nagra if he understood Urdu poetry, to which Nagra said he had a Masters' degree in Persian from Government College Lahore. Since the other general was more qualified than him, Niazi began telling jokes in Punjabi.

He was now his old self; no longer the morose, quiet person he had been for the last ten days. Now, it seemed, the pressure he had been crumbling under earlier was off. To me, his behaviour was shameful; instead of exhibiting a dignified and reserved demeanour as etiquette mandates in situations such as these (when terms of surrender are to be discussed with the enemy), Niazi was boisterous, sharing vulgar jokes with them as if they were old friends.

Standing in the middle of the room, Brigadier Siddiqui and a Sikh colonel were discussing something. Baqar handed over a paper to me saying, 'These are the terms of surrender'. I read it and found that the Mukti Bahini was included along with the Indian Army as the force to whom our army was to surrender. 'This is not acceptable to me,' I told Baqar.

'We are not surrendering; we are negotiating. In any case, please delete the words Mukti Bahini,' I requested, just as General Jacob entered with a pipe in his mouth. 'This is how it has come from Delhi. You take it or leave it,' he said. 'It is up to the commander to decide,' I responded, looking towards Niazi, who nodded his approval of the terms.

Angered and shocked, Admiral Sharif and I left the room. The Indians, we noticed once outside, were looking for chairs and a table, perhaps, we concluded, to arrange some ceremony. Approaching Niazi, we told him about what we had seen and advised him to not attend the surrender ceremony. 'The surrender has taken place. They can take us prisoners, beat us up, or kill us. Do what they like. Please do not attend a ceremony,' we pleaded. Despite our pleas, Niazi did attend the ceremony and signed the surrender documents.

Thus, it happened. A surrender, which could have been avoided through saner political manoeuvring at a national and international level.

# 14

## Friends and Foes

FOUR COUNTRIES—INDIA, THE SOVIET UNION, THE USA, AND China—were connected with what happened in East Pakistan in 1971; some directly and others indirectly. The former two played active roles against Pakistan, while the latter, known to be Pakistan's friends, became neutral because of our top leadership's inept handling.

Historically, the Indian leadership had very reluctantly agreed to the creation of Pakistan, with the hope that the new country would not survive for more than six months. They took several measures to hasten its collapse. Politically, they got it truncated by Mountbatten as much as they could. Economically, they withheld its share of fifty crores for as long as they could in the hopes of bringing about its economic collapse. On the military front, those elements which were to form Pakistan Army units were kept in India, Singapore, and Indonesia for as long as possible; they were only released piecemeal. A great burden of refugees was put on Pakistan. That Pakistan survived was as great a miracle as had been its creation.

The Indian offensive to undo Pakistan continued on all fronts. Occupation of Kashmir against the accepted principles of the partition of the subcontinent had purely one aim: to destroy the ideological basis for Pakistan and all that could ensure its security potential. Stopping

canal waters to Bahawalpur and Punjab was a part of this strategy.

Internationally, India tried to isolate Pakistan by maligning it as a creation of the imperialists. Pakistan, however, was able to obtain international support both for its survival and development. The Indians finally resorted to the ultimate weapon of armed conflict and initiated the war of 1965 by crossing the international border at Lahore. The Pakistan Army, with the full support of the people, was able to frustrate Indian designs.

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A Western historian gave an apt description of the Indian psyche vis-á-vis Pakistan and how the Indians wanted to bring an end to it. Writing after the breakup of Pakistan in *India, Pakistan and the Big Powers*, William J. Barnds summarized it thus: 'Indian leaders were convinced that Pakistan would not survive as a nation. The distance and differences between the two wings of the country, the lack of educated talent, and the paucity of natural resources did not inspire confidence in its future. Moreover, Indian leaders believed that it could not survive because it should not survive'.

Nehru, according to Barnds, described Pakistan as 'a medieval state with an impossible theocratic concept' and had expressed the wish that 'it should be so natural to have with Pakistan the closest possible cooperation, and one day integration will come. If it will be in four, five or ten years—I do not know'. While quoting Nehru as above, Barnds says, 'How Indian officials had envisioned the reunion of the two countries is not clear.'

Nehru was trying to trick the international community as well as his own people. His programme was not to have 'with Pakistan the closest possible cooperation' but to coerce it into submission, to use as much force against it as he could muster from all over the world. The programme for the use of force against Pakistan evolved soon after the creation of the two dominions and, according to Mehr Chand Mahajan, Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947 and later Chief Justice of India, 'Such a decision [invasion of Pakistan] was taken as early as 1947 by Sardar Patel at General Balwant Singh's headquarters. This meeting was attended by Indian Defence Minister Sardar Baldev Singh, General K. S. Thimaya, the Maharaja of Patiala, the Jam Sahib of Nawanagar, the late Maharaja Hari Singh, Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad, Deputy Head of the Emergency Administration of Kashmir, and a few other high ranking military officers. General Thimaya was requested to recruit and train guerrillas and the military headquarters to plan steps to be taken.'

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The Indians failed in almost every sector—economic, political, and military—and therefore changed their strategy to psychological warfare. The area chosen for this purpose was East Pakistan.

With the help of the East Pakistani Hindu community living there, who happened to be in a position to exert their influence in specified areas, especially in the educational and economic sectors, the Indians started poisoning the minds of East Pakistanis against West Pakistanis. It was here that at long last the Indians met with success.

Certain leaders of East Pakistan became receptive to such propaganda as they felt that this would help them gain power. The result was the beginning of agitation, language riots, killing of West Pakistanis, and eventually, hatching of a conspiracy to get East Pakistan by force. The rulers of Pakistan never realized the gravity of the situation; they in fact added fuel to the fire by denying East Pakistanis their rightful share in power.

Indians were in no position to attack East Pakistan during the 1965 war as they had only one division (9 Division) available for an offensive against one division (14 Division) of the Pakistan Army. Yet, some of our leaders gave credit for the defence of East Pakistan to China. The Indians fully exploited it to impress upon East Pakistan the futility of remaining with Pakistan.

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After the elections of 1970, the National Assembly session was postponed, resulting in military action. The Awami League leadership declared Independent Bangladesh and moved to Calcutta. The Indians provided them with all required facilities. They asked the Hindus to move out of East Pakistan and cross over to India where arrangements for their reception and accommodation had previously been made. Immediately afterwards, large-scale training of the Mukti Bahini was undertaken in at least three dozen training camps, with a regular army major general in charge. Even regular army officer training schools were used to train East Pakistani rebel officers.

This was not considered interference in the internal affairs of a neighbour. On the contrary, India made

much hue and cry about the burden of refugees on her economy and in the bargain earned billions of dollars in assistance. The Indian government continued, within India and internationally, to malign Pakistan with cooked up stories of atrocities, painting Pakistan as a villain and an uncivilized—rather a barbaric—nation.

Having won over active Soviet help in the war against Pakistan, Indira Gandhi went on a world tour to convince other nations of the legitimacy of the stand it had taken. When she was assuring US President Nixon of peaceful designs, her army had assembled around East Pakistan to commit aggression against a neighbour who unfortunately had an internal problem, and was weak at that particular time in history.

Indian strategists, led by Subramanian, unabashedly advised the Indian government to 'exploit the chance of the century'. There were, however, a few individuals who pointed out the dangers of supporting sub-nationalism, because in that case, nationalities in India would also demand independent status leading to the creation of at least a dozen countries out of India. But Indira Gandhi wanted to win the general elections scheduled for 1972 and she had to have an easy victory in East Pakistan, which she could already foresee, and which was too tempting for a politician to miss.

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Indians have ambitions of becoming a world power. They have dreams of controlling the land mass from the Hindu Kush to Bali in Indonesia and having influence over the entire Indian Ocean including the eastern coastline

of Africa. They consider themselves inheritors of the British Empire, entitled to influence over the Middle East, especially Iran and Iraq, including the old Asiatic kingdoms of Samarkand and Bukhara.

They considered East Pakistan as a block against the spread of their influence towards the east, and West Pakistan their westward movement. Their ultimate aim would be to eliminate Pakistan. Their weapons would be psychological; they would weaken Pakistan through internal strife and civil commotions and then move in with their armies to support dissident elements.

The Indians may not be interested in absorbing Pakistan; they may only want to be considered and accepted as the paramount power in South Asia with all the countries in the region under their hegemony. They would welcome the creation of four weak and small Muslims states. The greater the number of such small states, the weaker the influence and strength of the Muslims would be.

The paramount consideration in all this was—and is—to weaken Pakistan, to cut it into small pieces. It began with the occupation of Kashmir, and its second phase was finalized in December 1971, by separating East Pakistan from its western wing. And, while they were doing it in broad daylight much like a robbery, Indian writers and analysts soon started describing it as the 'Second Liberation of India, carrying a step further the independence she won twenty-five years ago'. The Indians shamelessly accepted their role in the creation of Bangladesh, and underlined that 'by winning the war in the way she did, India has made herself more secure than she ever was'. Time perhaps will paint a different picture.

Pakistan was considered 'maimed' by those who had struggled hard to make it an impossibility, particularly the Hindus and the British. Every effort had been made, while partitioning the subcontinent into India and Pakistan, to make the latter vulnerable. In spite of its vulnerability and small size, as compared to the area which should have formed part of it on the basis of population, Pakistan could not be ignored.

The process that led to its creation and the vision that had galvanised the Muslims of South Asia to struggle for the creation of a separate homeland was a new development. In an age which was witnessing the birth of nation states within the narrow confines of a geographical concept, Pakistan constituted an emphasis on a concept of nationhood based on religion, culture, tradition, and history, and was thus considered a new phenomenon. It was for this reason that no power could overlook the birth of a state which could look back to its own contribution to the progress of man as a species on the earth.

It was presumably in this context that the *Times*, London, in its issue of 15 August 1947, on the birth of Pakistan wrote: 'In the hour of its creation, Pakistan emerges as the leading state of the Muslim world. Since the collapse of the Turkish Empire that world, which extends across the globe from Morocco to Indonesia, has not included a state whose numbers, natural recourses, and place in history gave it undisputed pre-eminence. The gap is now filled. From today, Karachi takes the rank as a new centre of Muslim cohesion and rallying point of Muslim thought and aspirations.'

It was this 'place in history' that forced the big powers to take serious notice of it as a new phenomenon. The US and the Soviet Union both wanted Pakistan allied with them or, if possible, within their orbits as was understood then. For the US, as the leader of the developed and open Western societies, the situation did not offer any complication

Pakistan was worried about its security and economic development and, therefore, was not expected to have any inhibitions while edging closer to America. The real problem was the Soviet Union, which considered its ideology as the main yardstick measure to be close to one or the other country. The Iron Curtain still operated when Pakistan and India became sovereign states.

In spite of these ideological difficulties, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan wanted to give priority to Moscow while arranging his foreign visits. Things were set rolling by Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan, Pakistan's ambassador to Iran, who hosted a dinner at Tehran in honour of Liaquat Ali Khan when he was returning from the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference and made a brief stop in Iran. The Soviet Charge de Affairs was also invited. It was here that the Prime Minister indicated his eagerness to visit Moscow if a formal invitation was received.

This invitation was received in June and dates were in the process of being finalized. Even Pakistan's ambassador Shoaib Qureshi, was appointed to Moscow at the express desire of the Soviet government. But something somewhere went wrong and visit dates were not confirmed by the Russians.

In October 1949, the channel of communication between

Karachi and Moscow suddenly shifted from Tehran to New Delhi. It was through the Soviet Embassy in New Delhi that a further postponement was conveyed to Karachi, which raised suspicions that another party had intervened in the matter, the other party obviously being India. Liaquat, after this postponement, had to proceed to the USA. The membership of the Baghdad Pact, later known as CENTO, was the obvious consequence.

Moscow remained hostile to Pakistan ever since, even describing Occupied Kashmir as part of India. It was only when Ayub came to power and decided to normalize relations with Moscow and go there as a part of his considered policy that Soviet attitudes began to change. A meeting between Ayub and Shastri at Tashkent was a consequence of this mellowing of the Soviet attitude towards Pakistan.

India, however, continued to have an extensive equation with Moscow, and in the 1971 war, the Soviet Union rendered all possible help to India to defeat Pakistan. The reason for this was not the mere continuation of the old equation between India and the USSR. It was Yahya's extraordinary role which he had played to mellow hostility between America and China and pave the way for the emergence of a new normalcy between the two giants. This is how it happened:

President Yahya Khan visited the USA in October 1970 and had an hour-long exclusive meeting with President Nixon on the 25th. Yahya was to tour China three weeks later. Nixon asked Yahya to convey to the Chinese leader his desire to visit. Yahya flew to Dacca in the first week of November and after a day's stay there, left for Beijing,

where he discussed Nixon's proposition with Zhou Enlai. Yahya continued to serve as a diplomatic channel between Nixon and Zhou Enlai till a Chinese note was received by Yahya for transmission to Nixon, which was done promptly. The communication and other activities relating to this remained a complete secret till Henry Kissinger arrived in Rawalpindi on 8 July 1971.

With masterly secrecy, Kissinger was flown to China in the early hours of the next day, but was reported to have fallen ill and taken to Nathiagali for recovery and rest. Kissinger landed back at the Islamabad airport at 1 p.m. on the 11th.

Four days later, Nixon read at a press conference: 'Premier Zhou Enlai and Mr Henry Kissinger, President Nixon's Assistant for National Security Affairs, held talks in Peking from July 9 to 11, 1971. Knowing of President Nixon's expressed desire to visit the People's Republic of China, Premier Zhou Enlai on behalf of the People's Republic of China, has extended an invitation to President Nixon to visit China at an appropriate date before May 1972. President Nixon has accepted the invitation'.

The meeting between the leaders of China and the United States sought to normalize relations between the two countries, and also an exchange of views on questions of common concern. While making this disclosure, Nixon had not even made a remote reference to Pakistan's role, nor expressed his thanks to President Yahya for conducting unique diplomacy at the highest level between two of the presumably most bitter of antagonists.

The consequences of this secret diplomacy have proven to be a major feature in promoting world peace, but

Pakistan suffered for its role soon after. Both India and the Soviet Union, upon hearing the news, went berserk—the Soviet Union more so. Immediately, visits took place between Moscow and New Delhi. In August 1971 they announced the bilateral signing of a 'far-reaching treaty of peace and friendship' which provided for Soviet intervention in case of an 'attack on India', enlarging mutual defence arrangements where 'attack on one' would be considered an 'attack on the other'.

When actual hostilities between India and Pakistan started towards the end of October, the Soviet Union provided all sorts of military help to India, including the use of satellites to locate Pakistani troops' positions. America was, as usual, untrustworthy. It provided massive supplies to India during its 1962 skirmishes with China in spite of protests by President Ayub stating the hardware would be used against Pakistan.

In mid-1965, America expressed its displeasure over Pakistan's close ties with China and had the World Bank consortium meeting postponed. Two months later, when India attacked Pakistan, America halted all supplies to the latter; even ships carrying spares were diverted from high seas to other countries. And in spite of all Yahya had done in 1970 to bring America closer to China, the American Congress refused to sanction the sale or transfer of arms to Pakistan.

Even in 1971, we were forced to seek military equipment from other sources. This could not make up for (especially in the supply of spare parts) the non-availability of supplies from US sources. A majority of the Armed Forces' equipment was of US origin; without spare parts,

equipment on the ground was useless. Taking advantage of our friendship with China, the US asked Pakistan to help establish contact with them. Yahya used his good offices, arranged not only the meeting but also the aircraft and other facilities for Henry Kissinger's visit to Peking. We hoped that in return the embargo on spare parts would be lifted. But, in spite of Nixon's desire, the US Congress refused to oblige.

We must remember that in the sphere of war, it is normally the Congress and not the president who is the decision maker. We got no return on Henry Kissinger's success. On the other hand, Russian antagonism increased. The Indians exploited the situation and entered into a treaty of 'Peace, Friendship and Cooperation' with the Soviet Union. Through this agreement, India insured itself against possible Chinese intervention.

Pakistan was isolated and with complete freedom, the Indians sent their forces into East Pakistan. Even against open aggression, the US did nothing except for the so-called 'tilt' towards Pakistan. As is clear from Henry Kissinger's book, the US too was for a political solution in favour of Bengali nationalists.

The US Congress believes in democracy in the same way we believe in our religion. They would never help Pakistan, if under a dictator, against democratic India. Pakistan must remember this. All else is wishful thinking. The much talked about Seventh Fleet was not moving to help Pakistan in East Pakistan. It was moving to save West Pakistan.

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China and Pakistan have had friendly relations even when Pakistan was a member of SEATO. During the 1965 war, China provided direct and indirect help to Pakistan. China moved their troops to the Indian border and issued a sort of ultimatum to the Indians. Pakistan too had served China, first during the regime of Ayub, who openly pleaded China's case during his visit to America in 1961, and then by Yahya, who served as a bridge between the two.

In 1970–71, the Chinese attitude was cautious for two reasons. First, the people of East Pakistan were involved and their views and feelings could not be ignored by the Chinese. Open support of Yahya's internal policies in East Pakistan would have alienated the vast majority of people there. The Chinese, in view of their long term objectives in the eastern and north eastern region of India, could not afford the development of an unfriendly attitude among the people of the region.

The second reason was the attitude of Russia towards China and India. Having signed the military treaty of friendship with India, the Russians had assured China's neutralization by massing forty divisions on the border with China. If China moved troops against India, the Russians would have attacked it. It was only after such a guaranteed assurance that the Indians could attack East Pakistan.

Bhutto and the others reiterated, although vaguely and indirectly, that the Chinese would help, even though during their delegation's visit, the Chinese had clearly stated that they could not help us due to the obvious Russian threat. General Gul Hassan, Air Marshal Rahim

Khan and Vice Admiral Rasheed had accompanied Bhutto to China. China had already indicated their inability to help Pakistan in the event of war with India but Bhutto gave an impression that was at odds with the truth.

To encourage Yahya, Bhutto on 4 November said that if India attacked, the colour of the Ganges would be changed. The overall political, psychological, and military situation gave no cause for such an optimistic analysis. The purpose could only be to ensure that war started between Indian and Pakistan. After the war, the GHQ kept on feeding information to Dacca about possible Chinese intervention. When the governor telexed that 'if any friend was expected to help, then action should have an impact within the next 48 hours, otherwise negotiations should be opened in order to bring about a peaceful transfer of power', the high command gave him an assurance that 'Chinese activities had begun'.

On 14 December, Niazi got a message from the GHQ that the 'Yellow' were coming from the north and the 'White' from the south. This message encouraged Niazi to state that even if tanks were to pass over his body, he would stop them. I went to see the Chinese consul general to find out the details and arrange for coordination. The consul general knew nothing about it; he had received no message from Peking. On the other hand, he kept on repeating the same thing: 'Get the people on your side. Get the people on your side'. I could not tell him that *was* the main problem; that the people were against us.

# 15

## Sojourn in India

ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE FOR THE GENERAL OFFICERS TO be flown out of Dacca. Each one was allowed to take an ADC with him. Due to my appointment, I did not have an ADC or any personal staff officer. I thought of Siddiq Salik who was a likely target of the Mukti Bahini. I arranged to take him with me to Calcutta where he proved to be a good companion.

Gen. Niazi, Admiral Sharif, AVM Inamul Haq, Maj. Gen. Jamshed, Nazar, Ansari, Qazi Majid and I, along with one ADC each, were flown out on 20 December to Calcutta. When we landed on the tarmac, Admiral Sharif turned to Gen. Niazi and, in Punjabi, said:

''پہنچ گئے ہونا۔ روز کہندے سی کلکتہ جانا ہے''

'So you have reached—
every day you used to say we have to go to Calcutta'

This was a reference to Gen. Niazi's boasts of attacking and capturing Calcutta, an utterly impossible military objective for a country with resources inadequate even for its own defence.

From the very early days, there have been two types of officers in the Pakistan Army. On one end were the

soldier types and on the other were whom they dubbed 'staff types'. Soldier types projected themselves as fighters, but many were merely boastful, unrealistic, unreasonable, and—what is worse—failures in battle, the reason being that modern wars are conducted successfully by commanders with knowledge and understanding of the art of war.

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While we were in Calcutta, the Indians carried out a surprise search of our belongings and took away papers, notebooks, valuables, and currency. They also interrogated us individually. I was interrogated by Major General Jacob, who asked me about the military operation, plan, and conduct. I told him that I was not in a position to comment as I was not associated with the command of the troops. He insisted on knowing my opinion as a military officer. I said, 'You were lucky that I was not commanding the troops.'

Surprised, he asked me to elaborate. I told him of the original plan to fall back while inflicting casualties, fighting a mobile action and holding the middle ring along the rivers. He asked my opinion on the Indian action. I said, 'You have bought cancer.'

'What do you mean?' he retorted.

I said the provincialism, regionalism and racial nationalism they had sponsored and supported would spread in India as well.

He did not agree and said, 'We know how to handle such a situation.'

He then asked me how much money would be required to make East Pakistan a viable state.

'Seven crore a day,' I responded.

'And forget about it [the money] everyday—the seven crore people there will consume it [instantly].' He then quizzed me on the immediate problems which required attention. I listed establishment of communication and movement of food; otherwise, I said, famine might strike East Pakistan. The interview was recorded. I know that someday, in accordance with the Indian system, it will be published. The truth is therefore guaranteed.

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After about a month's stay in Calcutta, we were shifted to Jabalpur, where I had spent a few months as second lieutenant in 1943 as an Indian Army officer. Throughout the journey, we were escorted by Indian Army officers. I was surprised to see that a full colonel escorted me while the other general officers were looked after by lieutenant colonels. I asked the officer if they had made a mistake, as I was sixth in rank. While he did not know the reason, I suppose the Indian Army had factually incorrect information, supplied by the BBC. What had happened is related below.

Niazi had broken down in the Governor House on 7 December. He was not seen in Dacca after that. The BBC got the wrong idea, and in one of their broadcasts announced that Niazi had fled to West Pakistan and Farman had taken over. Thus, I became known as the commander of Pakistan forces in East Pakistan. Even Gen. Manekshaw broadcasted messages over the All-India

Radio, addressing me as 'Commander'. I had no radio set and did not hear of it till I saw leaflets on 14 December which had been dropped over Dacca, with surrender appeals addressed to me.

Niazi had been in Dacca throughout and was very much in command. This incorrect information created many problems for me later. Even in West Pakistan, people had the impression that I was at least second-in-command to General Niazi (this misunderstanding persists in certain circles till today). I was not even remotely connected with the command structure, and whatever decisions were taken were Niazi's.

As this BBC news was based on a despatch of their Bengali representative, the corps headquarters wanted him to be arrested. I rang him up and as a well-wisher, advised him not to send such messages about the corps commander lest he be harmed. I did not know that he was recording my conversation. The gentleman was later killed along with other Bengali intellectuals on 16 December. With the recording available, my name was connected with the killing.

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I had tried to save the civilians and had lodged complaints against certain excesses by a handful of individuals who possessed vast authority. The governor had no control over the army who had established their own prisons and courts. I had secured the release of Ataur Rahman, Masihur Rahman, Zahurul Islam, and a number of other leaders to create amiable conditions for negotiations. I had submitted to General Hamid, the COS,

in the presence of Brigadier Janjua that certain excesses were being committed by FIU and other Intelligence agencies and requested him to launch an investigation into the murder of NAP treasurer Saeedul Hassan.

The West Pakistanis did not like my approach towards Bengalis, but I maintain, even now, that one cannot rule over any group of people through force alone. A constitution is an agreement to live together—as equals with equal rights and obligations. West Pakistan's attitude was untenable and we suffered as a nation because of that.

To add to the injury, Niazi accused me before the Hamoodur Rahman Commission of being in contact with General Manekshaw. The whole drama had started with his disappearance and it was to cover up his cowardly actions that he concocted such a theory. The Commission investigated and found that there was no basis for such an accusation.

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Our new habitat in Jabalpur was a prisoner-of-war camp with barbed wire and inner and outer parameters. Search lights and dogs provided additional security to our detainers.

The camp had eight senior officers and eight orderlies only. General Niazi, Jamshed, Nazar, Ansari, Majid, and I, along with Admiral Sharif and Commodore Inamul Haq, were the inmates in what appeared to be a single officer's accommodation. The mess was across the road from where we were supposed to be getting our meals. As prisoners of war, however, one gets Other Ranks ration. There existed

no provision for breakfast from the mess; each one of us had to make a daily contribution of one rupee for it.

The food was extremely simple by Pakistani standards and was cooked normally in water and with barely any *ghee* used—at least it was healthy. We found most of the Indian officers thin and lean. It transpired during a discussion that, after the 1962 debacle against China, the Indian government had established a commission which had inter alia recommended a very strict disciplinary regime for the officer class—simple living and a very high standard of fitness. Their recommendations had been effectively enforced. In our case, commission reports are not even published so no remedial measures are taken.

The first day in Jabalpur was quite harrowing. We were allotted separate rooms. As we got in we found that all bolts had been removed to ensure that we could not lock the rooms from the inside. Two young officers searched me thoroughly. I had two hundred Pakistani rupee notes which they took away as if to guard against our escape from the camp.

As night fell, I was again made aware of my status. A high powered search light was directly kept beamed on my room, and a sentry detailed to keep a watch on my movements. Sleeping without bolting one's room was disturbing. The whole night the wind blew and the door, as it swung to and fro with the breeze, made a lot of noise. It was a small place, and with a double ring of barbed wire, it was impossible for us to escape, though we discussed the possibility many times.

As is usual with officer accommodation, there was an open space within the barbed wire fencing where we could

sit together. The conversation naturally turned to what had happened. During such discussions I often said that the reason for our defeat was that we had not become one nation. I was surprised to hear vigorous denunciation of my remarks. I was, however, for the first time, made aware of the ignorance of senior officers about national problems and issues. A remarkable change took place as time passed: I heard the same senior officers repeating my words to me, as if it was their own opinion.

***

A fortnight later General Kuldip Singh Brar of the Indian Army visited us. He was commander Southern Command. We all knew of him as a brave soldier who had been decorated during the Second World War, fighting the Italians in Eritrea (Somalia) [he was a *mona* (clean shaven) Sikh and liberal in his attitude towards Muslims. In pre-partition days, Muslims and Sikhs always got on well and were close to each other. It was only a couple of years before Partition that Master Tara Singh (a Hindu by birth) poisoned the minds of Sikhs, for which they are suffering now]. General Berar was quite open in his views. He said, 'You were placed in an impossible situation. Anybody else would have had to give up as you did. But it all happened because you were creating problems for us in Nagaland and among other hill tribes.'[35]

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Niazi soon established his reputation as a teller of lewd stories. Iqbal Singh, a Sikh major, was an administrative officer of sorts. He had been brought up in the United

Provinces (UP) from childhood and did not speak Punjabi. It was impossible to think of a Sikh who could not speak Punjabi. He had heard of Sikh stories and Niazi knew them all. Both enjoyed each other's company.

Niazi knew no limits of decency nor minded vulgarity in the slightest. Brigadier Khurrana, who hailed from Niazi's home town Mianwali, was visiting us one day while we were having a meal. Niazi in his usual mood gave vent to his filthy utterances.

'Sir, we Pakistanis already have a bad name. Please don't give credence to such accusations by your conversation,' I said.

He accepted the plea by saying that he was not serious about what he said. This was, however, a daily occurrence.

There were some brighter sides to our imprisonment. One had heard stories of prisoners becoming mentally imbalanced, some even accepting enemy propaganda. We found that Islam provided us the strength to face all adverse situations. In our religion, we found solace and comfort. We accepted that everything is from Allah and we have to return to Him. We got copies of the Quran from the bazaar, started recitation and prayed practically the whole day, read translations, and held discussions. We become fairly well-versed and this became a practice that most of the prisoners of war followed routinely even after our release.

There were lighter sides to our stay as well. We had reserved one room to serve as a mosque. The room was directly under Niazi's bedroom. Prayers were generally led by General Ansari. As the morning prayer is supposed to have a long *surah* in the first *rakaat*, Niazi used to wait till

we were about to go into *ruku*. Thus, he got to sleep some more. One day, Admiral Sharif, who had a great sense of humour, told Ansari that he would lead the prayers. He recited a shorter *surah* and got down to *ruku* and had nearly finished before Niazi could join in. After *salam*, he asked Niazi how he liked his rest. Niazi understood what he had done and felt ashamed.

Commodore Inamul Haq used to give Niazi full briefings on the international and national situation during an early morning walk. It had the required effect on Niazi as was apparent from his interviews after his return to Pakistan. As far as I remember, his opinion on various matters was quite different to what he later expounded after receiving briefings from friends and legal experts. For example, he later said that he was opposed to an attack from West Pakistan. His message and signals before the start of war belie his claim.

***

We were allowed to have our own radios, and regularly listened to broadcasts from Pakistan. The reports were quite impressive. It was heartening to know that great progress was being made in various fields of economic and industrial development under the dynamic leadership of Bhutto. Listening to the radio, one imagined industries propping up all over the country and lush green fields with trees lined up straight on both sides of blooming crops. After the promulgation of the 1973 Constitution, we visualized democracy and democratic institutions spreading their benign umbrella over the nation. By the bold utterance of 'we will eat grass', we envisaged

emergence of a strong nation akin to the once-defeated Germany and Japan.

When we returned in April 1974, we were disappointed. The health of the nation was worse than it was in 1971, and individual freedoms were curtailed more violently than any martial law administrator had ever done.

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Niazi had told us that we were under arrangement with the Indians to be in transit only. We were to go to Pakistan within three months. The Indian attitude also appeared to be in line with this thinking. Our camp appeared to be a temporary arrangement with barbed wire affixed to wooden sticks. After a couple of months we were told to fill in certain forms and make certain declarations. Preparations had been made to repatriate us to West Pakistan. However, after the Simla Agreement, something happened. A new camp was seen being prepared next to ours with proper iron pickets and welding of wires. Standing out in the veranda one could see the future prison being set up in which we were to live—perhaps forever. One thought of a bird watching a cage be prepared for it.

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A Lt Col. Randhawa of the Indian Army used to visit us quite often. He was also an artillery officer like me and came from the same district, Montgomery, now Sahiwal. We used to have extensive discussions on various matters. Like all Sikhs we met, he was also anti-Hindu. At that time there were perhaps about fifty major generals and other

Sikh officers in the Indian Army. When he complained that the Indian government would never make a Sikh the COAS, I suggested that they overthrow them as they were in larger numbers. He was sceptical about the possibility.

His prediction came true. Lt Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora, the man who had led the Indian Army to victory and was the senior-most general, was ignored, and a Hindu promoted. Sikhs were never fully trusted by Hindus even when they were their saviours in the earlier wars in Kashmir and the 1965 war.

Randhawa told us that during the Simla discussions, Bhutto had pleaded for the retention of prisoners of war in India. His argument according to Randhawa was, 'We have recently reinstated democracy. It is still nascent. We have many problems, which I have to solve. Dictators in Pakistan have fought wars with India. It is in India's interest that democracy flourishes in Pakistan. Help me by keeping the prisoners in India till I have strengthened democratic institutions.' According to Randhawa, Indira Gandhi agreed. We were to stay on for a few more years.

The Sikh Other Ranks were also quite outspoken. One day one of them while on duty began talking to my orderly, Ahmed Din, and said, '*Apan otheron wi lame aun te apan ithon vi lame aun. Apan kithe ho jaey te inna nun vie unnan nu vi lambe pa levey*' (we, the Punjabis, fight from Indian side and from Pakistan's side—if we get together we will sort out both the Indians and the Pakistanis). This was an indication of the developing regional sentiment amongst Indians.

Another unintended consequence of our imprisonment

was that we acquired a true understanding of life. Up to 15 December 1971, we were supreme; our orders were obeyed, we were respected, and perhaps feared. On 16 December, an ordinary soldier of the Indian Army had become our superior. What a change!

We were struck by the standard of education in the Indian Army and the desire of even the junior individuals like havildars to upgrade their educational qualifications. We met quite a few who were attending night classes for degrees in Law. The Indian Army had also made no changes in rules and regulations since the British days. They had maintained the system left behind by the British of Military Engineering Services and the Station Health Organization whom we saw carrying out their duties of inspection and reporting as was done before 1947. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, we have changed most of the regulations or ceased to implement them.

We had a kitchen as well where breakfast was prepared and food heated, if needed. Cylinder gas (LPG) was provided for the latter, but the supply was rationed to only one cylinder per month. One had to make do with it or make other arrangements. The luxury of Sui Gas in every house from Sui to Karachi-Lahore-Peshawar is unimaginable to the austere and simple-living Indian. They do not complain nor do they criticize their government for non-availability or regular supply.

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After a couple of weeks in Jabalpur, we were allowed to send letters to our homes. The letters were heavily censored by the Indians in a most nasty manner—intended

to inflict as much of a psychological shock as possible. Supposing a letter contained a sentence saying, 'so and so died on such and such a date', the censor would cut out with scissors the name of the dead person. The recipient of the letter would remain worried as to who had died. We complained to the ICRC but the dirty trick of the Indian censor was not fixed. This also resulted in delays, and replies to our letters took at least two months to reach us.

However, a few interesting developments took place. Maj. Gen. Qazi Majid, who was an emotional person, was worked up by the Indian censors' behaviour. He began writing about the top Indian leadership, and used derogatory remarks about them. The Indians did not react directly, but when he had a toothache, they pulled out a healthy tooth instead of the one which was giving him trouble. In spite of this, Majid persisted, and so did the dental surgeon. In the process, Majid lost quite a few good teeth.

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Speaking of the ICRC, one has to praise their work and attitude. Under the most adverse conditions, they helped the prisoners of war as much as they could. Their delegation visited us often. Their second visit was after the Indians had declared that around ninety officers and men were to be tried by the Bangladesh government. My name was also on the list. I was so sure of my innocence that I asked the ICRC delegate to arrange for my trial in a neutral country. 'But, before that, take me to Dacca and let me meet Mujib. If he does not embrace me in five minutes,

you may hang me,' I said. All the others were aghast at my request as nobody believed the trials would be fair or just.

What I did not realize was that maybe Mujib would not be the same with me. What happened was that after Mujib's arrest, his wife left their Dhanmandi House and started living incognito with her relatives out of fear of the army. One day, my staff informed me that she had been located and was living in poor conditions. I sent an officer with a message saying she was welcome to go back to her house and no harm would come to her. She refused. However, after a few months she sent a message to me asking for permission to go back to her house. By this time, the situation had changed. The Army Intelligence had come to know that her move had ulterior motives. She wanted to seek refuge in a foreign embassy which was adjacent to her house. Her request was turned down by the martial law administrator but I was the culprit in her eyes. She must have told Mujib about these stories when he returned. As a result, his attitude towards me changed.

However, before he was killed, he sent his apologies to me through Colonel Riaz of the Intelligence Bureau who we both knew well in Dacca and who was later posted in Abu Dhabi when Mujib was on official visit there.

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While prisoner, one often begins to see things from a different perspective. An army officer is a member of the privileged class in an underdeveloped country and we were no exception. We got used to a life of comfort as the tenure of our service in the army increased. From hardship to comfort is a welcome transition but from comfort to

hardship is a distasteful experience; and we had to go through it. One day, I realized how simply one could live. I had two suits of clothes, as if we had reverted to village life. I found no difficulty in coping with washing and changing day in and day out. The result was that when we returned, I had the confidence to face life even if the worst happened. In response to questions about my future plans, if I was harshly dealt with, I said that I would go back to my village. In my life, I have had many ups and downs. When one is down, one has to accept it and recover after the worst is over.

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While talking to the Indians, I was surprised to find that contrary to our beliefs, their intellectuals thought that the creation of Pakistan was 'good riddance from Muslims—the trouble makers'. They were not interested in reabsorbing Pakistan in India. Instead, they planned to create four weak Muslim states so that they could have hegemony over them.

The partition of India had taken place on the basis of Muslims and non-Muslims. After independence, India, though created as a secular state, had been affected by religious tensions. Very early to develop was the prejudice against the scheduled (untouchable Harijans) caste who, according to the puritanical Hindus, cannot be treated as equal human beings. The scheduled caste members have violently asserted their rights and have become a substantially powerful aggrieved party. Next came the conflict with the Sikhs, which has ultimately resulted in the demand for a homeland for the Sikhs. The Christian and tribal people

of Nagaland and adjoining areas have differences with Hindus too.

A large section of the majority of Hindus, as was foreseen by Muslim leaders, started to reveal their true colours, shedding the cloak of secularism, and showing their biases by associating themselves with Hindu revivalism. The situation in India, therefore, was completely contrary to 1947. The Muslim population in the Indian subcontinent had grown at a very rapid rate of 3.2 per cent. If all Muslims of the subcontinent unite and win the sympathies of scheduled castes, Sikhs, and Christians, i.e. non-Hindus, they can form a substantial force and may even be able to form a government—given a genius like Bhutto. And that was the dream of Bhutto.

I read an article by Karanjia, the editor of the Bombay weekly, *Blitz*. He had after 1971 visited Pakistan and interviewed Bhutto. During the recorded interview, Bhutto said two significant things: The first was that politics in India and Pakistan is *bazaar* politics. You say in public what you do not do in your official capacity. The second thing he said was: 'I cannot become Prime Minister of India, but I can be its Foreign Minister. When I become its Foreign Minister I will show to the world how the foreign policy of a great country is conducted'.

Given the calibre and intelligence of Bhutto, and the military and strategic power of India, there is no doubt that he was not boasting.

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One day, a renowned historian, Piyare Lal, who was associated with the Indian Defence College visited us. He

had a long session with me in which he asked for my opinion on the Indian plan.

'There was no plan,' I told him. 'You attacked from three sides, with an overwhelming force of nine divisions, a force which at best could be termed a police force. I am talking purely from a military analyst's point of view. The plan would have been impressive if you had conquered East Pakistan with four or five divisions. One could then praise the various attitudes adopted and appreciate the finesse in manoeuvres,' I said.

'Advancing from all three directions, all moving towards Dacca, required no genius to plan. The East Pakistan force could be overcome by pinning down all the forces at the border even by the Border Security Force, and then breaking through the middle, as it happened, to reach Dacca with one division. This would have been a brilliant plan, worthy of being taught at Staff College, perhaps equal to Guderian's move against Warsaw in 1939,' I concluded. Piyare Lal did not agree with me on the Indian plan being a mediocre one. It succeeded because of a faulty defensive plan. Otherwise, the plan was ideally suited to a defensive strategy of gradual withdrawal on all fronts on to the river lines around Dacca.

Trying to exploit my sensitivities as a Rajput, he said, 'You are intelligent because you have Hindu blood,' and, for some unknown reason he added, 'So does your president.' I did not know about the ancestry of the president at the time, so I did not comment but did not agree with his opinion. There is no doubt that Hindus were more learned, better educated, had world class educationists, scientists, philosophers, and intellectuals. But, they were

the product of their attitude, a sustained work ethic and application to educational pursuits, rather than for religious reasons.

The Hindu boys and girls attended to their studies with greater devotion and dedication. The Muslim boys wasted their time. Their IQ is as high as that of Hindu boys, as is evident from their performance in countries outside the subcontinent. Pakistan had to be created because basically we were left behind in education. The purpose of its existence is negated if our younger generation does not excel in education.

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One was confined to the four walls, rather the two layers of barbed wire, of the POW camp. Yet one could see life in India. We could see the construction of military buildings quite close to our camp. Each morning, a number of labourers would gather at the gate of the establishment, the contractor would choose the required number and chase the others forcibly away, while they begged for jobs.

The men were paid six and the women three rupees per day. The contractor would prefer women to men as he had to pay less and got more work out of women by making them work till late. He was seen using his stick to beat the women labourers when they got tired and rested for a while. One could not imagine such a thing happening in Pakistan.

The physical condition of workers was deplorable in that area. Most of them appeared to be underfed. In central India, men have many wives who work for them. The

West makes a great fuss about Muslims being allowed four wives, without mentioning the conditionality of equal treatment and special circumstances of orphans and widows being looked after. They, however, never mention that in the Hindu religion, there is no restriction—there are cases where a horde of twenty women could be slaving under one man.

# 16

# Politicians' Responsibility in the Breakup of Pakistan

IT HAS BECOME CUSTOMARY TO BRING UP THE EAST PAKISTAN tragedy around 16 December each year. What is intriguing is the emphasis on forcing the entire responsibility of the events of 1971 on the armed forces of Pakistan with the aim of disgracing them in the eyes of the nation and the world at large. Very little is revealed about the role played by the political parties and leaders of both East and West Pakistan.

Without using too many words of our own, we present before the nation the role played by the political leaders in the tragedy of East Pakistan.

Let us see what Bhutto said in *The Great Tragedy*. Only relevant extracts are provided:

> 'The crisis did not suddenly descend upon us. The successive governments of Pakistan have handled the affairs of State so poorly that an impartial observer would be driven to conclude that the leadership of Pakistan has excelled in making mistakes.'

> 'The language controversy arose soon after Partition and introduced bitterness between the two Wings of Pakistan.'

'The Founder of Pakistan died in September 1948. After his death the mantle of leadership fell on Liaquat Ali Khan, who was assassinated three years later. The other leaders of the Muslim League who subsequently came into prominence lacked the courage and the vision to make Pakistan a dynamic and progressive State. The first signs of disillusionment set in about five years after independence. The people began to feel isolated and indeed cheated. Petty politicians considered Pakistan their private fief and clung to power by postponing the framing of the Constitution and general elections. Pakistan has since paid a heavy price for failure.'(Bhutto, 1978: 2)

'The extremist leaders of East Pakistan deliberately misinterpreted the Chinese ultimatum in order to tell their people that East Pakistan had been saved not by the Armed Forces of Pakistan, but by the Chinese ultimatum. The Chinese ultimatum did prevent India from attacking East Pakistan but this does not mean that our Armed Forces were not competent to repel any such Indian aggression.' (Bhutto, 1978: 7)

'Sheikh Mujibur Rehman introduced his Six Points formula.' (Bhutto, 1978: 8)

'Centuries ago, Machiavelli observed that wrong political decisions are like tuberculosis, difficult to detect in the beginning but easy to cure, and with the passage of time, easy to detect but difficult to cure.' (Bhutto, 1978: 9)

'The formula taken as a whole was a veiled charter for a

confederation which contained the genesis of constitutional secession.' (Bhutto, 1978: 11)

'A few politicians from the West Wing enthusiastically supported Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from the beginning because they also wanted the secession of their provinces in the West Wing. These same individuals had bitterly opposed the creation of Pakistan. In Six Points they saw their chance to destroy Pakistan'. (Bhutto, 1978: 14)

Bhutto has repeatedly in the book blamed Mujibur Rahman for bringing about the crisis. I am sure Mujibur Rahman also blamed Bhutto for the same. 'It was awesome knowing that the fate and future of our countrymen lay in three pairs of hands and that Allah in His wisdom had made mine one of them'(Bhutto, 1978: 48).

Now let us see what Richard Sisson and Leo Rose, in their book *War and Secession—Pakistan, India and the creation of Bangladesh,* say after interviewing 36 Pakistanis, 49 Indians, 12 Bangladeshis, and 9 US top military and political leaders in a research that spans eight years.

'The 1970 crisis in East Pakistan was the outcome of the CMLA's efforts to arrange for the creation of a liberal constitutional order and to withdraw from power. Upon assumption of power on 26 March 1969, Gen. Yahya indicated his intention of arranging to withdraw from power. Upon assumption of power on 26 March 1969, Gen. Yahya indicated his intention of arranging a return to a representative form of government with a constitution to

be devised by "representatives of the people elected freely and impartially on the basis of adult franchise". The Legal Framework Order of 1970 was promulgated on 30 March 1970 with a call for general election at both the national and provincial levels to be held in October that year. The newly elected National Assembly would then be convened to draft a Constitution within 120 days of its first sitting as a constituent body.'(Sisson, Rose, 1990: 2)

'In the election to the 300 seats of the National Assembly held on 7 December 1970 the regionally-oriented Awami League led by S.M. Rahman was elected with an absolute majority winning all but two seats in East Pakistan. The PPP led by Z.A. Bhutto won the majority of the seats in the four provinces of West Pakistan. He did not contest for a single seat in East Pakistan.' (Sisson, Rose, 1990)

'The political battle ensued as the election resulted in the creation of two regionally dominant parties, each bent upon wielding power at the national level, the former asserting its right to govern as a consequence of its predominance under majoritarian rule, the latter asserting its claim to participate in governance on basis of the necessity of a "Concurrent Majority" of broader regional representation. Each threatened to make governance difficult, if not impossible, if its claims were not honoured.' (Sisson, Rose, 1990)

'Because of the emergence of two parties where they were divided by strong ideologies and more so personalities and were regionally-based, and were fearful of each other's

designs, party solidarity was emphasized which inhibited efforts at compromise. After the elections, as time went on, normal suspicion and distrust intensified and the demands of each side became more rigid.' (Sisson, Rose, 1990)

'Awami League became rigid on Six Points which in the early stages were negotiable being 'not word of God'. They were not willing to compromise on the principle of majority rule though they would accept smaller parties from West Pakistan to be partners in government.' (Sisson, Rose, 1990)

'The major objective of the leadership of the Pakistan People's Party to keep the party together, was further complicated by Bhutto's aspiration to national prominence. The top leadership of the PPP early on decided that it could not participate in the National Assembly without a guarantee of a share of governmental power.' (Sisson, Rose, 1990)

'On the other hand Awami League started to change its rhetoric from a demand for a "Six Points" constitution to a commitment to its realization. Elections were termed as a referendum on the Six Points programme. To counter this despite its minority position in the National Assembly the PPP launched a campaign to establish itself as one of the two 'majority parties in Pakistan'. Throughout the negotiations towards a political settlement that ensued until the military crackdown in late March, Bhutto was too aggressive and confrontational. On 20 December in Lahore, he declared that no constitution could be framed, nor any government formed at the national level, without the

cooperation of the PPP. He stated bluntly that the Peoples Party was not prepared to occupy the opposition benches, and that it could not wait for another five years to come to power—it had to share power now.' (Sisson, Rose, 1990)

This article published in *Pakistan Times* in 1970:

'Sheikh Mujib responded on 3 January in which he declared that the constitution would be based on Six Points and that no one could stop it, but that he would be responsive to the interests of the people of West Pakistan in the constitution-making process. He also reminded him that the Awami League was the majority party for the entire country—there were no two majority parties—and that his party would act with the authority and responsibility that was customary for majority parties in representative systems. The League would form the constitution with the cooperation of representatives from West Pakistan.

Because of the apparent inability of party leaders to agree to meet to discuss constitutional issues, Yahya felt compelled by early January to initiate a more direct dialogue. He visited Dacca on 12 January. At the end of his stay Yahya referred to Sheikh Mujib as the next Prime Minister of Pakistan adding that his own job was finished, that he was preparing to leave office, and that the transfer of power would occur soon. Both leaders independently indicated their satisfaction with the talks and optimism about the future.

On 17–18 January 1971, Yahya was a guest of Bhutto.

Bhutto registered his undisguised anger with Yahya for having unnecessarily and prematurely "made Mujib Prime Minister". Yahya replied that he had not made Mujib Prime Minister, Mujib's majority had.

Bhutto then asked Yahya to test Mujib's loyalty. If Mujib was a "true Pakistani", postponement would constitute a test.'

'The PPP delegation visited Dacca on 27–30 January 1971. Bhutto wanted to determine the place that he and his party would have in a new government. He proposed the possibility of the Presidency. Mujib refused to share power.

On 13 February Yahya announced that the National Assembly would be convened in Dacca on 3 March 1971. On 15 February Bhutto announced that the People's Party would not go to Dacca for the opening of the Assembly on 3 March. He could not, he declared, put his party members in the position of being 'double hostages' in Dacca. Even other East Pakistani leaders Nurul Amin and Ataur Rahman Khan responded harshly. The latter declared that Bhutto's stand was nothing less than an attempt to divide Pakistan. Bhutto's political offensive did not stop. On 17 February he declared that a National Assembly meeting in Dacca would be a 'slaughter house'. Mujib's response was thus: if Dacca would be a slaughter house for Bhutto, then West Pakistan would most certainly be the same for him. He finally decided not to go to West Pakistan to meet the President.

> Bhutto met the President on 18 February. Yahya decided to put Mujib in his place to re-establish the supremacy of the President's office. On 28 February, in Lahore, Bhutto threatened personal as well as public harm if he was denied control of the political situation. In his customary earthy language and style, Bhutto threatened to 'break the legs' of any member of his party brazen enough to go to Dacca and talked of one-way tickets for other members. He added that he would call a general strike and launch political agitation from Khyber to Karachi.' (*Pakistan Times*, 1970)

I have described in the previous chapters how Mujib and his party, basing their propaganda on the Six Points, created hatred against West Pakistan, deliberately whipped up the emotions and sentiments of the Bengalis against their brethren in the West, and eventually took over all the functions of the government. It was an open revolt against which the army was forced to take action. Indian intervention followed, which resulted in the breakup of our country.

Despite what has been said above, Yahya cannot be absolved of responsibility. He was fully responsible for all that happened, but the tendency to criticize and blame the army as an institution can, as it did then, only help the evil intentions of our enemy.

# 17

# Hamoodur Rahman Commission

IN THE ORIGINAL OUTLINE DRAFT OF THIS BOOK, I HAD NOT included any reference to the Hamoodur Rahman Commission as time and again we were told that its report was a secret document. Different personalities, however, both political and literary (journalists), have commented on it from time to time. Recently, only selected portions of the preliminary report have been published in more than one newspaper. I, therefore feel free to write on the commission and its report concerning me.

After spending two years and four months as a prisoner of war in India, I returned to Pakistan with the last batch on 21 April 1974. We were cordially received but there was an air of secretiveness and a generally reserved behaviour. There were no media people questioning us; it was a weird situation.

Immediately after the events of 1971, changes of immense magnitude had taken place in the country. Bhutto had taken over as president of 'New Pakistan' and our isolation might have been arranged for our protection. We were to tell our story only to the officially appointed agencies, and were to be interrogated by a team of officers. Actually, all of the forces in East Pakistan had arrived before my repatriation and had been duly interrogated. Hence the picture which the interrogators had before them

was clearer than we had individually. A questionnaire was given and we filled it. The reports of each individual were sent to the GHQ, where a special committee had been formed under Lt Gen. Aftab Ahmed Khan, with three senior officers of the rank of Major General or equivalent from the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force.

I appeared before this committee, as did other senior officers. I would like to point out here that individuals tend to defend themselves, but when a committee or commission is set up, it has before it the statements of others as well and is thus in a position to corroborate, weigh, and sift through the facts before arriving at conclusions. The opinion they arrived at was thus of a neutral body and is mostly correct, in light of which the committee was to recommend retention, disciplinary action, or retirement of the officers concerned. I was cleared honourably.

Immediately afterwards, we were to appear before the Hamoodur Rahman Commission, which had been established to enquire into the circumstances which led to military defeat in East Pakistan. It was a judicial body headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Hamoodur Rahman. The other members were: Justice Tufail Ali A. Rehman, Chief Justice of Sindh High Court; Justice Sheikh Anwarul Haq, Chief Justice Lahore High Court; Lt Gen. Altaf Qadir, Military Advisor; and Mr Hassan, Legal Advisor.

The commission had been set up much before our repatriation and had completed their preliminary recommendations with the remarks, 'When Major General Farman Ali, Lt General Niazi, and some other officers, now prisoners of war in India, become available, a proper enquiry should also be held into the circumstances in

which General Farman Ali came to remit his message through Mr Paul-Marc Henry to the United Nations Secretary General and who, if anyone, authorized him to do so. On Farman's return from India he [is] be questioned about the signal ... '. This remark had been flashed around as if the commission had found me guilty. How on earth could one form such an opinion when in actual fact it was upon our return that we appeared before the commission? The commission was reactivated after we returned; it submitted its final report after examining us. The final report has been kept a secret.

Nobody talks about the final report because the commission had gone beyond the restricted charter 'to enquire into the circumstances which led to military defeat', and had also commented on the politicians' contribution to the tragedy.

Before appearing in person, each one of us had submitted a written statement to the commission, on the basis of which the members had prepared questions to be put to us. This was my first experience appearing as an accused person. I remained before the commission for a period of about thirteen hours, spread over three days.

The first day was difficult because of an opinion I had expressed in my written statement on Fazalul Haq and Suhrawardy, and their concepts concerning Pakistan. Justice Hamoodur Rahman was Bengali. He did not like my observations, and in his opening remarks, showed his annoyance. I felt the commission to be a hostile court, but did not withdraw my remarks, nor did I consider it prudent to argue with the Chief Justice. As the examination went on, the atmosphere began changing in my favour.

On the second day, I was invited to have tea with the honourable Justices where, during the informal conversation, I found that they had a full understanding of the role the politicians had played in bringing about the tragedy.

The third day was the most satisfying one for me. After about three hours of examination that day, I was really surprised and elated to hear from Justice Hamoodur Rahman. 'General Farman, we find you to be the most intelligent and straightforward officer from amongst those who appeared before us,' he stated. 'We will today present to you the military plan which we are going to recommend to the government, which should have been adopted for the defence of East Pakistan. We would like to have your comments,' he added. A view graph was set up and Lt Gen. Altaf Qadir presented the plan to me.

The accused had become a judge. I offered my comments which were accepted.

Their verdict is as follows:

## EXTRACT FROM HAMOODUR RAHMAN COMMISSION REPORT

### THE ROLE OF MAJ. GEN. FARMAN ALI

13. Before we conclude this chapter, brief remarks about the role of Maj. Gen. Farman Ali would not be out of place, for the reason that he has been conspicuously mentioned in several contexts by the international press as well as by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

14. This officer remained in East Pakistan continuously from 28 February 1967 to 16 December 1971. He was Commander, Artillery 14 Div., in the rank of Brigadier from 28 February 1967 to 25 March 1969. On the promulgation of Martial Law by General Yahya Khan on 25 March 1969 he was appointed as Brigadier (Civil Affairs) in the office of the Zonal Administrator of Martial Law. He was later promoted as Major General in the same post. From 4 July 1971 to 3 September 1971 he functioned under the designation of Maj. Gen. (Political Affairs), and from the latter date to 14 December 1971 he worked as Adviser to the Governor of East Pakistan, ceasing to hold this appointment on the resignation of Dr A. M. Malik.

15. It was inherent in the appointments held by him since the promulgation of General Yahya Khan's Martial Law on 25 March 1969 that Maj. Gen. Farman Ali should come into contact with civil officials and political leaders, besides being associated with Army Officers and Martial Law Administrators of various levels and grades. He frankly admitted before the Commission that he was associated with the planning of the military action of 25 March 1971, and also with the subsequent political steps taken by the military regime to normalise the situation, including the proposed by-elections necessitated by the disqualification of a large number of Awami League members of the National and Provincial Assemblies. Nevertheless, as a result of our detailed study of the written statement, submitted by the General and the lengthy cross-examination to which we subjected him during his appearance before us, as well as the evidences

from other witnesses from East Pakistan, we have formed the view that Maj. Gen. Farman Ali merely functioned as an intelligent, well-intentioned and sincere staff officer in the various appointments held by him, and at no stage could he be regarded as being a member of the inner military junta surrounding and supporting General Yahya Khan. We have also found that at no stage did he advise, or himself indulge in, actions opposed to public morality, sound political sense or humanitarian considerations. In this context, we have already commented at some length, in a previous Chapter of this Report, on the allegation made by Sheikh Mujib ur Rahman at General Farman Ali was wanting to 'paint the green of East Pakistan red,' and have found that the entire incident has been deliberately distorted.

16. During the critical days of the war this officer had no direct responsibility for military operations, but he was, nevertheless, closely associated with the Governor of East Pakistan as well as the Commander Eastern Command. It was for this reason that he got involved in what has been called "the Farman Ali incident." As we have seen in the chapter dealing with the details of the surrender in East Pakistan, the message authenticated by Maj. Gen. Farman Ali for being dispatched to the United Nations on 9 December 1971 had been approved by the Governor of East Pakistan, who had obtained prior authority and clearance from the President of Pakistan, namely, General Yahya Khan, for the purpose of formulating proposals for a settlement and cessation of hostilities in East Pakistan. In these circumstances, the responsibility for its authorship

and dispatch could not, therefore, be placed on this officer. In fact, he had, at the time, demanded trial by court martial to clear his position. In view of the facts, as they have now emerged before the Commission, there is no need for any such enquiry or trial.

17. Maj. Gen. Farman Ali was present at Headquarters Eastern Command, during the last phases of the events when Indian Officers came to meet Lt. Gen. Niazi for negotiating the details of the surrender. From the detailed accounts which have come before us of the behaviour and attitude of both these officers, we have no hesitation in recording the opinion that at all relevant times Maj. Gen. Farman Ali advised Lt. Gen. Niazi on correct lines, and if his advice had been accepted, some of the disgraceful episodes might have been avoided.

18. We have also examined the reason why the Indian Commander-in-Chief, General Manekshaw, addressed certain leaflets to General Farman Ali by describing him as Commander of the Pakistan Army. It appears that on 8 or 9 December 1971, Lt. Gen. A. A. K. Niazi had not been seen outside his command bunker, and there was a broadcast by the BBC that he had left East Pakistan and that General Farman Ali had taken over the command of the Pakistan Army. It was for this reason that the Indian Commander addressed General Farman Ali calling upon him to surrender. We are satisfied that at no time did Major General Farman Ali indulge in any communication with the Indian Generals. The situation was in any case rectified when Lt. Gen. Niazi made a

public appearance at Hotel Intercontinental, Dacca, before foreign correspondents.

19. An allegation was made before the Commission by Lt. Gen. Niazi that Maj. Gen. Farman Ali had sent out of East Pakistan a large sum of money, approximately Rs 60,000, through his nephew who was a Helicopter Pilot in the Army and left Dacca in the early hours of 16 December 1971. We reported Major General Farman Ali to seek his explanation regarding this allegation and some other matters. He has explained that a sum of Rs 60,000 had been given by the President of Pakistan to the Governor of East Pakistan for expenditure at his discretion. After the Governor of East Pakistan resigned on or about 14 December 1971, Maj. Gen. Farman Ali, as Advisor to the Governor, became responsible for this amount. He paid Rs 4,000 to Islamia Press, Dacca, and this payment was within the knowledge of the Military Secretary to the Governor, who has also been repatriated to Pakistan. Out of the remaining amount of Rs 56,000, Maj. Gen. Farman Ali paid Rs 5,000 to Maj. Gen. Rahim Khan at the time of his evacuation from Dacca on the morning of 16 December 1971 to meet the expenses en route which may be required not only by Maj. Gen. Rahim Khan but also by the other persons who were being evacuated with him. It was stated by Maj. Gen. Farman Ali that Maj. Gen. Rahim Khan had rendered the necessary account of the sum of Rs. 5,000 given to him.

20. After deducting payments made to the Islamia Press, Dacca, and to Maj. Gen. Rahim Khan an amount of Rs. 51,000 was left with Maj. Gen. Farman Ali which

he physically handed over to his nephew Major Ali Jawahar at the time of his departure from Dacca on 16 December 1971. Since his arrival in Pakistan, Maj. Gen. Farman Ali has deposited Rs 46,000 in the Government Treasury and handed over the treasury receipt to Brig. Qazi, Director Pay and Accounts, GHQ. He has claimed the remaining amount of Rs 5,000 on account of house rent allowance sanctioned by the Government of East Pakistan for the residence of his wife and family in West Pakistan. He has stated the sanctioned allowance was Rs 1,400 PM and the period involved was twelve months, so that he could claim Rs 15,000 but he has claimed only Rs 5,000.

21. We are satisfied with the explanation rendered by Maj. Gen. Farman Ali, as the facts stated by him are easily verifiable and we do not think that he would have made incorrect statements in this behalf before the Commission.

22. For the foregoing reasons we are of the view that the performance and conduct of Maj. Gen. Farman Ali during the entire period of his service in East Pakistan does not call for any adverse comment.

***

The commission had a special assignment to investigate thoroughly a particular accusation against me. During Bhutto's official visit to Dacca, Mujib showed him a diary in which I had written that the 'Green of East Pakistan will be painted Red'. Mujib had been showing this to the

whole world trying to prove that we had 'planned' the genocide of the people of East Pakistan and the sentence mentioned above was used as a proof of their contention. The paint 'red' connoted a bloodbath.

When confronted with this accusation, I accepted that the writing was mine but the words were not. The background story is as follows: During the election campaign, the NAP (Bhashani Group) held a meeting in Paltan Maidan in June 1970. As it happens in public speeches when a leader sees millions of people in front of him, he says what he would never say otherwise.

Certain portions of the speeches were reported by the Intelligence staff to the corps commander. As I was responsible for civil affairs, Martial Law Administrator General Yaqub rang me up and said, 'Farman, tell Toha not to make inflammatory speeches otherwise we may have to take action.' I asked him what Toha had said. I wrote his words down on the table diary which was lying in front of me, and these were: 'Green of East Pakistan will be painted Red'.

I asked for Toha to come and see me. Toha was a diehard communist, believing in scientific communism, and a senior political leader. There were a large number of cases against him, therefore, he had gone underground. After establishing contacts with eight people, I got through to him and assured him that nobody would arrest him when he visited me in the Governor House.

I read out the written sentence and asked him why he had said this. He told me that this was not part of his speech. It was Qazi Zafar (he later became PM of Bangladesh) who had uttered these words. What this meant was, he said,

that they would convert Green (Islamic state) of Pakistan into Red (communist) state—red stands for communism all over the world. I accepted his explanation, informed General Yaqub, and the matter was closed.

The commission checked with the Government of Bangladesh who sent the original diary, and concluded in their report:

> A perusal of this document leaves no doubt in our mind that it was indeed in the nature of a writing pad or table diary on which the General made miscellaneous notes during the course of his work. The explanation given by the General appears to us to be correct.

Connected with the above was an accusation that I had gotten two hundred intellectuals killed on the night of 16 December 1971. The surrender had taken place before the evening of 16 December and the Indians had taken control of Dacca.

The fact is, a large number of dead bodies were found on the morning of the 17th. They could have been killed by anybody except the Pakistan Army as it had already surrendered the previous day. The background as known to me is:

On 10 December at around sunset, I was asked by Commander Dacca Maj. Gen. Jamshed to come over to his office at Pheel Khana, Dhanmandi. On getting closer to his command post, I saw a number of vehicles. He was coming out of his bunker and asked me to get in his car with him. After a few minutes I asked him as to what these vehicles were for.

He said, 'That is what we are going to discuss with Niazi.' While on our way to the corps HQ, he told me that he had received orders to arrest a large number of intellectuals and other prominent individuals.

I said, 'Why? What for? This is not the time to do such a thing.'

Jamshed responded, 'Tell this to Niazi.' When we got to Niazi's office, Jamshed raised the question. Niazi asked my views.

I said, 'Now is not the time. You will have to give an account of those you had arrested earlier. Please do not arrest any more.' He agreed. My fear is that orders countermanding the earlier orders were perhaps not issued and some people were arrested. I do not, to this day, know where they were kept. Perhaps they were confined to an area guarded by mujahids. The corps or the Dacca garrison commander lost control over them after surrender, and they ran away out of fear of the Mukti Bahini who were mercilessly killing mujahids. The detained individuals might have been killed by Muktis or even by the Indian Army to give the Pakistan Army a bad name. Dacca had already been taken over by the Indians.

While we were still in Dacca, I was called by Maj. Gen. Nagra of the Indian Army and confronted with this accusation.

I asked him, 'How could I be involved? One could not have killed so many people single-handedly. I have no command. I have no civilian authority.' He accepted this. But the question was reopened when we reached Jabalpur. Brigadier Leslie DDMI Indian Army came to interrogate us.

His first question was, 'You are accused of having two-

hundred intellectuals killed on 16/17 December. What have you to say about it?'

I said, 'Gen. Niazi is sitting upstairs. Go and ask him [whether] I did or did not oppose the arrest of these people on 10 December. If I was opposed even to their arrest, how could I order their killing?' He got up immediately and went to see Niazi. After ten minutes or so, he came back and extending his hand said that he had no more questions to ask. Niazi had confirmed what I had told Leslie.

The Indians themselves were very keen to find proof to implicate any responsible individual of the Pakistan Army in the incident. Brigadier Bashir of East Pakistan Rifles and fifty other officers were kept in solitary confinement in Delhi and grilled thoroughly. One of the officers told me that they had offered to expedite repatriation of anyone who would say that General Farman had given orders for the killings. Not one did, for which I am indebted to them. Not one was tempted by the offer. And here in West Pakistan, the allegations that the Pakistan Army killed the intellectuals of East Pakistan were given wide publicity. The purpose was political, to malign the army.

After having been cleared by both the Special Committee of the GHQ (called the Aftab Committee) and the Hamoodur Rahman Commission, I was posted as Director General Military Training in the GHQ. This was a clear indication of the verdict but I got confirmation from outside Pakistan as well.

President Fazal Ilahi Chaudhry visited Vienna in Aug 1975. There he met ex-Governor of East Pakistan Dr Malik and brought a letter for me from him. This facsimile of the letter is at the end of the book.

Bhutto had restricted the domain of the commission to enquiring into only the causes of the military debacle, though much of what happened in 1971 was the result of political misdoing, calculated or out of ignorance. It was for this reason that the commission thought it fit to examine Bhutto and to record that the Peoples Party chairman could not provide a satisfactory explanation for raising the slogan '*Tum udhar hum idhar*'. As far as Yahya was concerned, the commission stated that he had accepted responsibility for everything.

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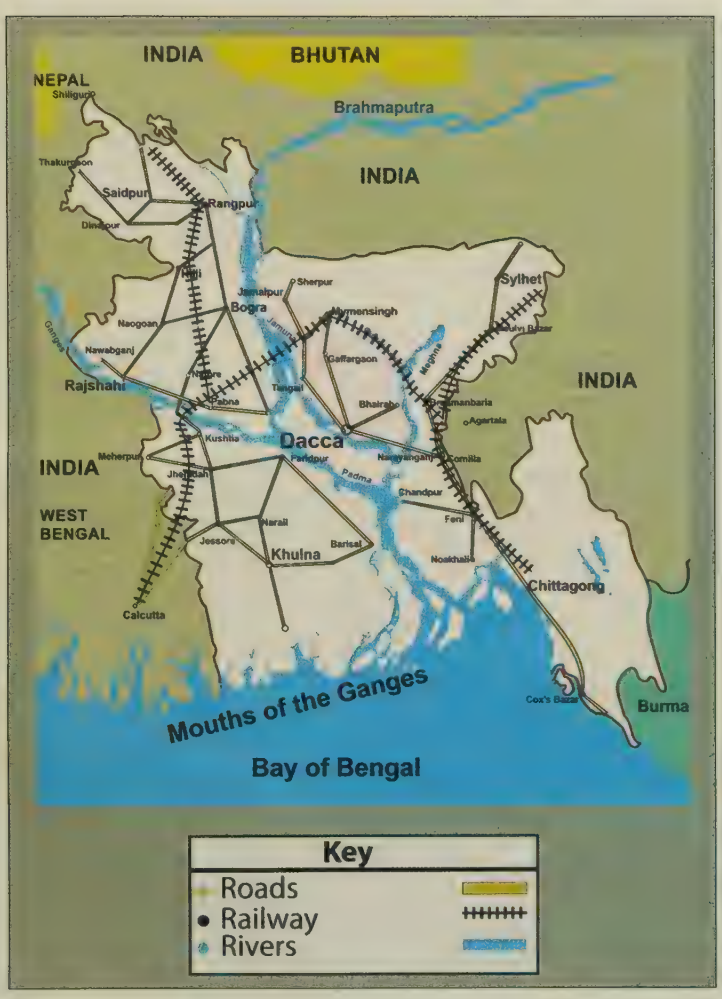
26. Raja, Khadim H., *A Stranger in My Own Country*, 98–9.
27. Salik, Siddiq, *Witness to Surrender*, 51.
28. Gen. Farman's letter to his daughter (see appendix 2).
29. Gen. Farman's letter to his wife (see appendix 2).
30. Salik, Siddiq, *Witness to Surrender*, 50.
31. Salik, Siddiq, *Witness to Surrender*, 56–7.
32. Salik, Siddiq, *Witness to Surrender*, 62–3.
33. Salik, Siddiq, *Witness to Surrender*, 68–70.
34. Salik, Siddiq, *Witness to Surrender*, 76–7.
35. Gen. Farman's letter to his wife (see Appendix 2).

# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX 1

1. East Pakistan & Surrounding Countries
*Source*: Shafiq Ur Rahman

2. Operational Sectors
*Source*: Shafiq Ur Rahman



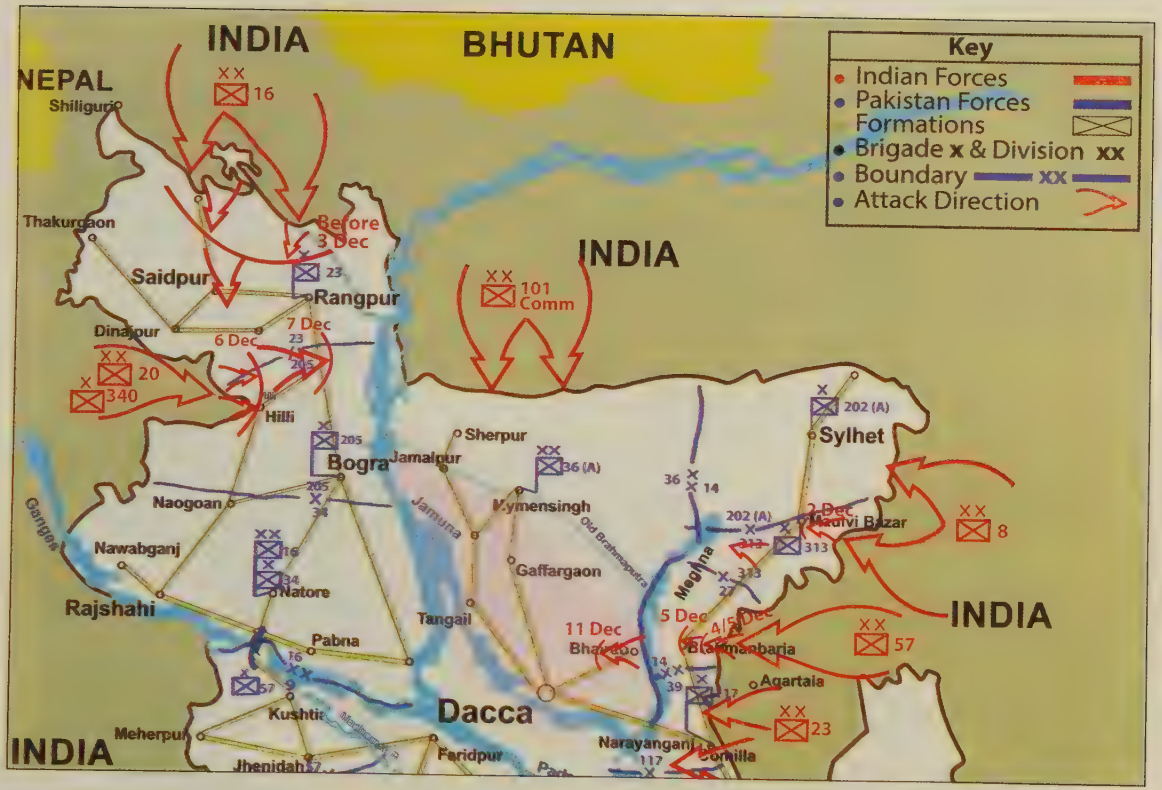

3. Roads, Rivers, and Railway Network
*Source*: Shafiq Ur Rahman

4. East Pakistan Lines of Defence (Operational)
*Source*: Shafiq Ur Rahman

5. Indian Attack (Plan) on East Pakistan
*Source*: Shafiq Ur Rahman

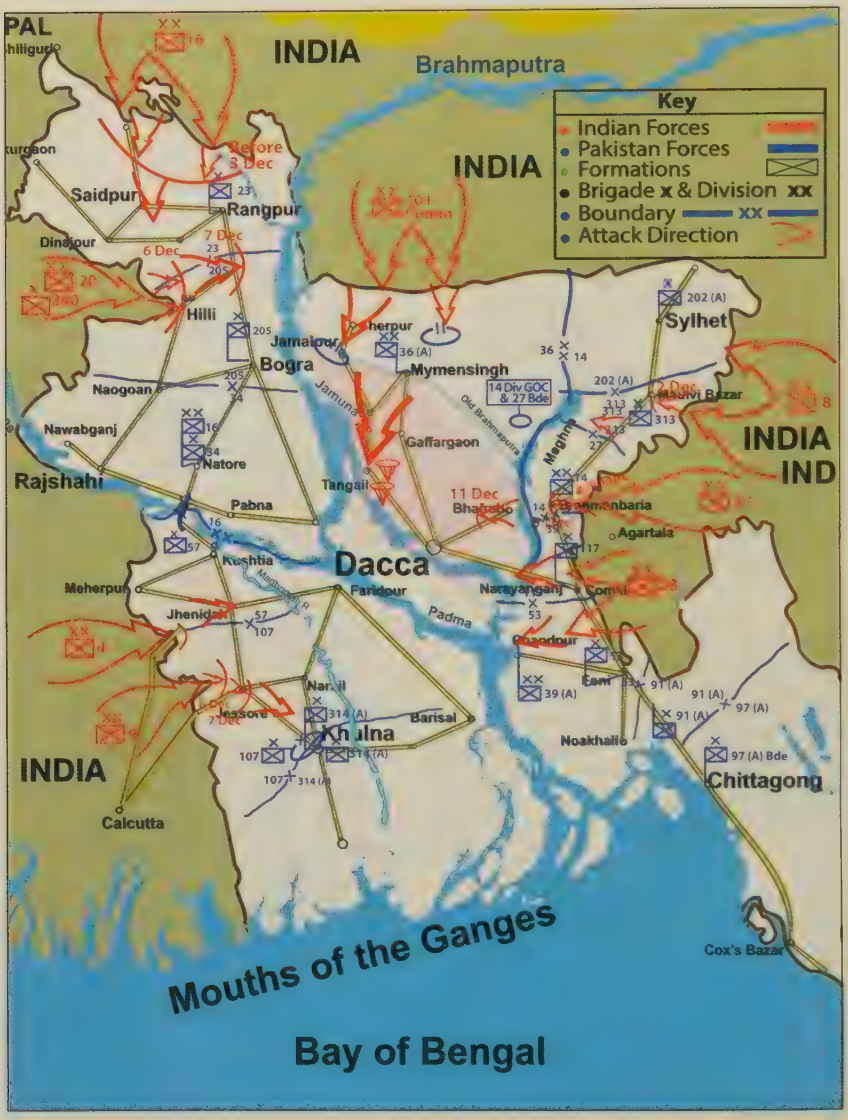
6. Deployment of Own Troops & Employment of Indian Forces
*Source*: Shafiq Ur Rahman

7. 9 Division Operations
*Source*: Shafiq Ur Rahman




8. 16 and 14 Division Operations
*Source*: Shafiq Ur Rahman

9. 36 and 39 Ad hoc Divisions Operations
*Source*: Shafiq Ur Rahman




10. Overall Situation in East Pakistan on 10 December 1971
*Source*: Shafiq Ur Rahman

# APPENDIX 2

My Dearest Aesha,

Khush Raho. Salaam. I wanted to write to you but there has been an overload of work. Today when Shafiq *(son)* mentioned, I felt that you may be upset that I haven't written. You must be worried about the conditions here. On the telephone one can only say all is well. But some incidents keep on taking place. India is fully supporting Awami League, and they keep on creating trouble along the border. They also resort to indiscriminate firing. However, by the Grace of Allah, we have control over our areas. Only yesterday Indian air crafts bombed one of our northern posts, but there was only minor damage. In Dacca and the adjoining villages, occasional incidents keep on taking place. Also in Dacca bomb explosion incidents have happened, however, generally the bombs are thrown at places which are not inhabited as they *(miscreants and rebels)* are afraid of being caught. Therefore, resultant damage is less. Sometimes they also damage the electric power lines, however, we are able to restore electricity timely. In villages there are some leftover elements of EPR *(East Pakistan Rifles)*, and they resort to loot and plunder. However, we are slowly and gradually taking counter measures to completely control such incidents.

Whatever has happened - is a huge tragedy. On the one side at least one hundred thousand Biharis have been killed, leaving behind thousands of widows and children, with nobody to look after them. The Govt is doing a little bit *(to take care of them)*, but how much and for how long. On the other side Bengalis are in a terrible state; Lacs *(hundred thousands)* are homeless. Those going to India will also be pushed/ shoved around *(treated badly)*. Hundreds are missing, they also have wives and children. One cannot see their crying and wailing. I am in a bad state, I have feelings and sympathy for both Bengalis and Biharis, I know them both. Then I have my official responsibilities, to hold those responsible for *these* abominable *acts*, at the same time having to take care of their families; I am in a strange state of mental frustration *(due to this tragedy around me)*. What will happen? It is beyond my intellect/wisdom *(comprehension)*. Only Allah knows what the circumstances are likely to be.

No one listened to us *(our advice for reconciliation)*. There is an effort to bring in MNAs etc., so that a Govt can be formed.

Abu ul Khair *(driver)*, has come, but is in a bad shape. I have given him some money.

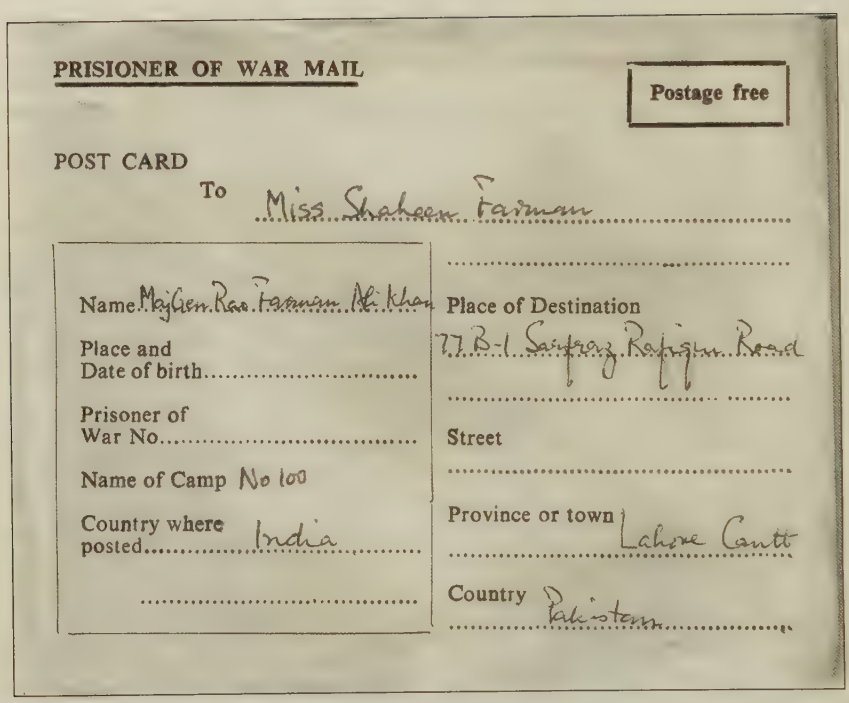
Monsoons have started, therefore, it keeps on raining which keeps the weather pleasant. How is baby Asiya *(grand-daughter)* and Qaiser *(daughter)*. I miss everyone. My prayers and love to them.

Only yours, Farman

Dated 6th Jun or July 1971

[Translators Note: Some essential meaning is lost in literal translation, some terms need explanation; both are given in *italics*]

1. Translation of letter from General Farman to his wife Aesha from East Pakistan, dated mid-1971



PRISIONER OF WAR MAIL

Postage free

POST CARD

To Miss Shaheen Farman

Name Maj Gen Rao Farman Ali Khan

Place and Date of birth

Prisoner of War No

Name of Camp No 100

Country where posted India

Place of Destination

77 B-1 Sarfraz Rafiqm Road

Street

Province or town Lahore Cantt

Country Pakistan

2. Letter from General Farman (as a POW) to Shaheen (daughter), 10 September 1972

Maj Gen Rao Farman Ali Khan
10 Sep 72

My dear Shaheen,

Your letters of June 18th and July 1st delivered yesterday. You have asked me to say whether I believe in Darwins theory of evolution or in religious belief of creation of man. I will write to you in detail in a couple of days time because I will have to quote from the Holy Quran – the most authentic source. As far as a short answer is concerned I believe in creation by God of everything. How he did it is His business. It does not rule out the possibility of ~~great~~ evolution. For example when He says that He created the Earth and the Universe & whatever is there in them or between them He does not explain how it came about. The Holy Quran says that the creation took 6 days – but IT also says that each day of Allah is equal to one thousand to fifty thousand days by your reckoning. (Well, I am getting into what I would write in my next letter Insha Allah – so I will not write further).

I agree with you that Journalists play a very important role. I believe that it was due to the Journalists that we got such a bad press in in the world for the situation in East Pakistan.

Once Clair Hollingworth wrote to me saying that "your cause is as as just as that of the Arabs but both of you have failed to project your point of view". I remember that in the early stages when we moved into areas which had been in the control of Mukti Bahini & rebels we found 350 dead bodies of women & children in Behrab Bazar, 300 bodies of women & children in Ispahani Jute Mill, a slaughter house in Khulna & a slaughter house in Pahartali (Chittagong) where untold atrocities had been committed, I sent a Signal to HQ CMLA & arrange for publicity saying that if we release this information later on it will be considered an afterthought. I was overruled for fear of reprisals in West Pakistan against Bengalis. Now all those bodies are being produced before the world as if they had been murdered by Pak Army. We did not pay much attention to publicity & so we suffered. These days press can make or unmake President of USA – the most important post in the world.

I am well – no back pain or anyother problem. So do not worry.

With lots of love to you all

Yours Daddy.

## Note to General Farman's reference to killings in letter to Shaheen:

The *Washington Evening Star* reported on 12 May 1971 the following story from Mort Resenblum, who was one of the six foreign newsmen who toured East Pakistan that month:

> In the port city of Chittagong, a blood-spattered doll lies in a heap of clothing and excrement in a jute mill recreation club where Bengalis butchered 180 women and children ... Bengalis killed some West Pakistanis in flurries of chauvinism. Bengali civilians and liberation troops began mass slaughter of Mohajirs (Indian migrants) from the Indian State of Bihar and raced through marketplaces and settlements, stabbing, shooting and burning, sometimes stopping to rape and loot ... .

The *Washington Evening Star*, in the same issue, also carried the following despatch of the Associated Press of America wire service:

> 'Newsmen visiting this key port yesterday said there was massive shell and fire damage and evidence of sweeping massacre of civilians by rebels ...'. 'At the jute mills owned by the influential Ispahani family, newsmen saw the mass graves of 152 non-Bengali women and children reportedly executed last month by secessionist rebels in the mills' recreation club.' 'Bloody clothing and toys were still on the floor of the bullet-pocked club. Responsible sources said thousands of West Pakistanis and Indian migrants (Muslims settled in East Pakistan since 1947) were put to death in Chittagong between March 25, when the East Pakistan rebellion began to seek independence from the Western Wing, and April 11 when the Army recaptured the city ...'. 'Residents pointed to one burned out department building where they said Bengalis burned to death three hundred and fifty Pathans from West Pakistan'.

In a despatch from Chittagong, Malcolm Browne of the *New York Times* reported on 10 May 1971:

> ... But before the Army came, when Chittagong was still governed by the secessionist Awami League and its allies, Bengali workers,

> apparently resentful of the relative prosperity of Bihari immigrants from India, are said to have killed the Biharis in large numbers ... .

The *Sunday Times* of London published in its issue of 2 May 1971 a dispatch from its Pakistan correspondent, Anthony Mascarenhas, who had toured the rebellion-hit areas of East Pakistan in the first fortnight of April 1971. He reported:

> 'In Chittagong, the colonel commanding the Military Academy was killed while his wife, eight months' pregnant, was raped and bayoneted in the abdomen. In another part of Chittagong, an East Pakistan Rifles Officer was flayed alive. His two sons were beheaded and his wife was bayoneted in the abdomen and left to die with her son's head placed on her naked body. The bodies of many young girls have been found with Bangladesh flagsticks protruding from their wombs ...'. 'The worst-affected towns were Chittagong and Khulna where the West Pakistanis were concentrated ...'.

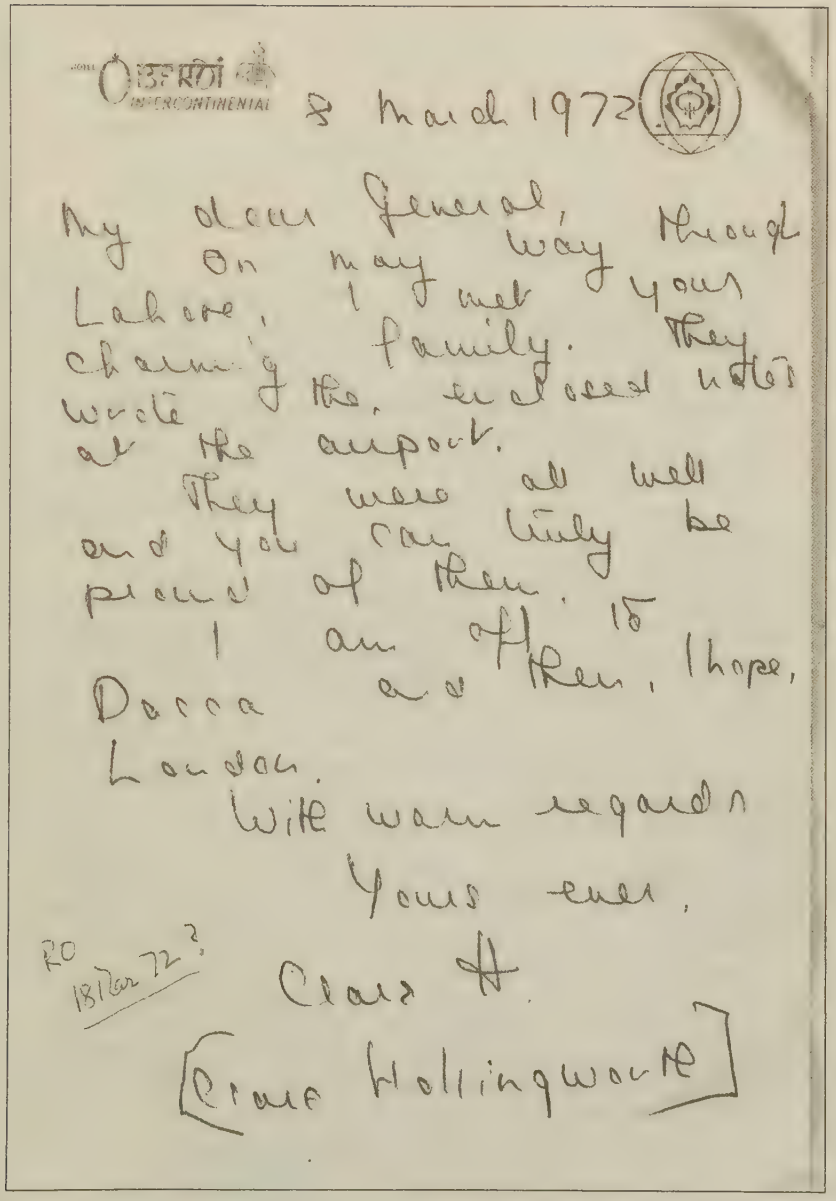
The *Northern Echo* of Darlington in Durham, in its issue of 7 April 1971, said:

> Leon Lumsden, an American engineer on a U.S. aid project, said that for two weeks before the Army moved last week, Chittagong's predominantly Bengali population had been but cheering West Pakistanis in the port ... .

Some 5,000 non-Bengali refugees from the Awami League's terror in Chittagong, who arrived in Karachi on board a ship in the third week of March 1971, related harrowing stories of the genocide launched against the non-Bengalis. The federal government prohibited their publication in the West Pakistan Press to prevent reprisals against the local Bengalis.

Mob violence, such as the massacre of Biharis by Bengalis at Crescent Jute Mills in Khulna referred to earlier, involved indiscriminate killing of men, women and children.

Large-scale incidents of Bihari-Bengali ethnic violence appear to have involved indiscriminate killing.


OBEROI INTERCONTINENTAL

8 March 1972

My dear General, Though on my way
Lahore, I met your
charming family. They
wrote to me, in Urdu, a letter
at the airport.
They were all well
and you can truly be
proud of them. I
am also proud of them, I hope,
Dacca
London.
With warm regards
Yours ever,
Clare

RO
18 Mar 72?

[Clare Hollingworth]

3. A letter Clare Hollingworth of the *Daily Telegraph* wrote to Gen Farman in 1972 after she met his family in Lahore when he was a POW in India

Vienna.
15-8-75.

My dear General Farman Ali Sahib.
Assalamo Alaikum.

I was so very glad to learn that Justice Hamidur Rahman Commission exonerated you from all guilts allegations committed; and you have been put in charge of Foreign Foundation. Thanks to Almighty Allah and His Mercy. He always does the Supreme Justice. He has done another Justice yesterday, the 14th of August, when Pakistan was born.

How is your health now, and how is your family?

Where is Mujaffer Ahmad Sb and what is he doing now? If you know his address please send me. Where are the two young officers who were my Military Secretary and A.D.C? They were so loyal, and I always pray for them. I will be glad to know how they and others are doing.

In Secca jail my health broke down, and after much difficulties I could come to Europe, first in Austria, in July last year. I have had three operation during the 12 months; and recently the doctors have suggested another operation for enlarge prostate. I have occasional high blood pressure; and diabetis mellatus. Heart and kidney functions are also not good. Please pray for me.

I am leaving here on the 21st evening for London and after staying a week there I go to Washington on the 30th Aug. and pass the month of Ramjan there. Please write to me at the Washington address (over leaf)

With salam and kindest regards.

Yours sincerely
(S) A.M. Malik.

4. Letter from Governor Malik to General Farman, 1975

CONFIDENTIAL

Maj Gen K M Arif
CMLAs Secretariat
Rawalpindi
57/24/CMLA/ML-1
6 April 1978

Maj Gen (Retd) Rao Farman Ali Khan
Managing Director
Fauji Foundation Harley Street
Rawalpindi Cantt

Please refer to your letter no 1364/1/FF dated 30 March 1978 addressed to Gen M. Zia-ul-Haq. The Chief Martial Law Administrator appreciates your sentiments in seeking permission to publish the conclusions of Hamood ur Rehman Commission concerning your role. Since the Commission report has not yet been published by the Government, making public a part of it by private parties is apt to be misunderstood as an indirect leak sponsored by the Government.

It is regretted that under the circumstances, permission cannot be given at this stage. We are not aware of the source from where you have obtained the extracts submitted alongwith your letter.

Yours sincerely,

Maj Gen
(K M Arif)

5. Response to General Farman's declassification request, 1978

*MAJ GEN RAO FARMAN ALI KHAN (Retd)*
Candidate National Assembly Constituency NA-137
Noor Manzil, Mandi Road Tele: (0442) 4140 OKARA.
JANUARY 31, 1985.

MAJ GEN MALIK ABDUL WAHEED
C.O.S. to the President
Chief Martial Law Administrator Secretariat
Rawalpindi.

My dear Waheed,

As you know I am contesting election from Okara for National Assembly seat No. 137 and am being opposed by Mian Muhammad Zaman. Although, he was rejected for membership of Majlis-i-Shoora because of conviction under Ghunda Act, still he is trying to get into an "Islamic Assembly". However, I am not concerned with his character. It is the responsibility of the Government of Pakistan to adjudge such cases. What I am really concerned about is, the very serious allegation he is making publicly against me. The allegation is that I was responsible for the East Pakistan surrender. Cuttings of his interview are attached.

As regards the allegation, Hamood-ur-Rehman Commission and Aftab Committee Reports are available with the Government of Pakistan. Whatever the Hamood-ur-Rehman Commission has said about me should be published so that I, and the people of Pakistan learn about my role in East Pakistan.

I know that this Report has been declared as secret. If the Government is reluctant to publish that portion of the Hamood-ur-Rehman Commission Report which relates to my role, the Government of Pakistan should atleast make a statement that having studied the Hamood-ur-Rehman Commission Report, it very clearly and unambiguously cleared me from all blame and responsibility for the tragic events that took place in the Erstwhile East Pakistan. If this is also not possible, I may please be permitted to approach the Supreme Court of Pakistan to seek my remedy.

I shall be grateful for placing this plea of mine before the President for his kind direction.

Sincerely,

Maj Gen (Retd)
Rao Farman Ali Khan

6. Letter from General Farman to the President Secretariat for declassification of the Commission report, 1985

# APPENDIX 3

Lt Gen (Retd)
**Ali Kuli Khan Khattak**
HI(M)

It is a great pleasure and a matter of immense honour for me to write on one of the icons of the Pakistan Army. Major General Rao Farman Ali Khan. General Farman was one of those distinguished officers whose name was greatly admired by all officers of the Pakistan Army.

In 1971, I alongwith 4 Army Aviation Squadron were posted to what was the erstwhile East Pakistan.

These were troubled days in East Pakistan because of the rebellion and ongoing Civil War hatched and supported by India, USSR and the "Bangladeshi" rebels. But it was only when we arrived in Dacca, did we realise how extremely dangerous and totally confused the state of affairs were in the Eastern Wing of Pakistan. Suffice it to say, the affairs in East Pakistan were almost completely out of control of the Political Government / Administration and it was only because of the untiring efforts of General Farman and the Pakistan Army, that total collapse of law and order was averted.

In these troubled times, General Farman, held the pivotal appointment of Advisor on Civil Affairs to the Provincial Govt of East Pakistan and was at the centre of efforts to regain control. It should also be known that the only force which kept communications going between Dacca and the numerous far flung pockets of loyal Pakistanis was the Army Aviation. The pilots of Army Aviation saw from close quarters, how the desperate situation was saved from a total collapse.

Unfortunately, the calm remained only for a short duration and by October 1971 large Indian Army formations (Divisions) in uniform openly but in a yet undeclared war attacked East Pakistan in the Khulna and Jessore Sectors.

These were indeed most difficult times for Pakistan because of the differences of opinion which were prevalent within the highest echelons of the Armed Forces and the Government of Pakistan. To have maintained balance and sanity must have taken herculean efforts which I am proud to say, Major General Rao Farman Ali Khan successfully did. It may also be mentioned that General Farman could easily have escaped before the 'Surrender', but a dedicated and courageous soldier that he was, he decided to stay on with his team and was taken Prisoner of War with them.

With his courageous behavior and outstanding leadership qualities in this, the most tragic period of Pakistan's history, General Farman set up an example which will be very difficult to emulate and he will be remembered forever in the annals of Pakistan Army and Pakistan.

Lt Gen (Retd)
(Ali Kuli Khan Khattak)

Ghandhara Nissan Limited, 109/2, Clifton, Karachi-75600.
Ph. 5830251-7 Fax : 5870136 Cable : Ghandhara

1. Lt General Ali Kuli Khan Khattak (Retd)

I, Lt Gen Syed Muhammad Amjad (Retd), was MD Fauji Foundation (FF) from April 2002 to December 2005.

Soon after taking over, one of the first things I set about was to educate myself on the history of FF. It has a long and interesting history, the roots lying in the Second World War. It was inevitable that I took a good look at what my predecessors had done to turn FF into a big business house and a huge welfare organization.

Till 1963 it functioned under the Adjutant General's Branch in GHQ. Thereafter the first MD was posted and ever since it has been managed by the MD and his team.

All MDs did their bit to improve the lot of FF. However, in my talks with people who had been in FF for some time one name that stood out was of Maj Gen Rao Farman Ali Khan (may Allah bless his soul).

FF had started its business pursuit in the textile sector. Maj Gen Rao Farman Ali Khan initiated a strategic shift from textile to fertilizer. This one move proved extremely successful and improved the financial condition of FF manifold. I can speak for the period till 2005 when the major contribution to the Foundation was made by the Fertilizer Sector. It not only fueled the welfare expenditure but also helped enhance the business activities.

In 2005 FF had over 9 million beneficiaries (retired soldiers' families — officers are not beneficiaries). They owe a lot to the late General in whatever FF can do for them today in the fields of health care and education.

May he rest in eternal peace. Aameen.

2. Lt General Syed Muhammad Amjad (Retd)

1

*Brig Ali Jawahar Khan (Retd)*
*Scheme 3, Chaklala, Rawalpindi Cantt*

The children of Gen Farman contacted me to write down an episode well known to us privately, but not in public knowledge.

As a major, I was posted in 4 Army Aviation Squadron in East Pakistan during the 1971 War. When the fall of East Pakistan became evident, 4 Army Aviation was ordered to evacuate all helicopters to Burma on night 15-16 Dec 71, and to take with us as many families as possible.

Before flying out to Burma, I went to meet Gen Farman. Being his nephew, I was worried for him as there was a rumour that he was under house arrest after resignation of Governor Malik on 13th Dec 71.Whereas,in actuality, he had left the Governor's house and shifted to a vacant house in Dacca Cantt. I reached his house at about 0130 hrs on night 15/16 Dec and literally begged him to come with us; since he did not Command any troops, nor he had been given a new responsibility after the Governor's resignation; therefore, he could leave without abandoning any responsibility.It is also not known to many, that he instead asked me to take the wounded Gen Rahim.But he refused to accompany despite my pleading. He said that "I do not want anyone to say that Farman ran away". I literally begged him, but he stayed back to join the troops at the time of surrender. A proud and brave soldier accepted this humiliation to save the honor of his uniform, his family and his Rajput tribe.

When I met him on return from India, I suggested that this incident should be made public, plus other details about the debacle. However, he was contented and deeply gratified, since he had just been told by the Hamood ur Rahman Commission tribunal that he is cleared of all charges leveled against him. He did not feel it necessary or appropriate to pursue the matter further.Also it was not appropriate for him to pursue the matter further, as the Army had posted and appointed him as Director General Military Training; and being in uniform one is not expected to make public statements.

Unfortunately for him, the Govt refused to release the official Hamood ur Rahman Commission's Report, with subsequent generation of random accusations, with no regard to the truth or attempt to know the truth. That is when he decided to clarify the facts by writing this book which was published in 1992.

In addition, since there has been a lot of misreportingabout his role in East Pakistan, therefore, I feel it appropriate to mention what I knew of Gen Farman's responsibilities, both civil and military, and his official designation during the period 1969 till Dec 1971:

a. Initially as a Brig and later on after promotion to Maj Gen, he remained as Advisor on Civil Affairs of East Pakistan with successive governors: Gen Muzaffar ud Din, Admiral Ahsan, Gen Yakub Khan, Gen Tikka Khan & Governor Malik. Their domain was civil services and political affairs. He was also sometimes asked to be a Government spokesperson.

3. Brigadier Ali Jawahar Khan (Retd)

b. As an Advisor to the governor, he was neither part of nor was under the Headquarter Eastern Command, throughout this period from 1969 till 1971, and therefore, did not Command any troops.

c. After the 1st March 1971 postponement of the National Assembly session, the Awami League call for strike led to a total control of all government facilities by their workers. To re-establish the writ of the Govt., on directions of the President and GHQ, Gen Tikka, (both Commander Eastern Command, and Governor), directed GOC 14 Div Gen Khadim, and Gen Farman, Advisor to the Governor to adapt it into the plan of Operation 'Search Light'. Thereafter, the Military Action was initiated by the Eastern Command on orders of GHQ. Gen Farman was tasked to supervise Dacca Garrison, but had no operational role. In his function, he was assigned to coordinate Mujib's arrest. In this regard, since he had no troops under his Command, therefore, an Army Col was sent to assist Gen Farman in executing his given task. The Gen asked the Col to arrest Mujib, and also directed that no troops be taken to ensure secrecy and surprise, and to obviate any casualties. But since the Col was not under his Command, therefore, he did not readily accept his orders, and instead, went to his Commander Gen Mitha to seek his decision. It is also important to mention, that tactical planning of 'Operation Searchlight' was about 'regaining' control not inflicting casualties.

d. It has also been questioned, whether the Task Forces Al Badar & Al Khalid were under the Gen's Command. These forces as known to us, were conceived by the Intelligence Agencies, butfunctioned under the direct orders of either GHQ or Eastern Command, and NOT the office of the Governor.

Whereas Gen Farman is no longer with us, but out of respect to him and to truth regarding important events for posterity, I have stated the above, about which I have personal and complete knowledge.

Dated: 08 September 2016

Brigadier
Ali Jawahar Khan (Retired)

**MY RECOLLECTIONS OF GENERAL FARMAN**

by

Lt Col. S. Riaz Jafri (Retired), GSO-1 to DMLA (Civil Affairs)

Dacca, East Pakistan

I was the GSO-1 (General Staff Officer) ie 'Principal Staff Officer' of Major General Rao Farman Ali Khan, Deputy Martial Law Administrator (Civil Affairs & Advisor to Governor East Pakistan) in 1971. I had the singular privilege of interacting and working day and night with him, and therefore, I consider that i was privy and having complete knowledge about Gen Farman's role and functioning during the very crucial period of 1971 in East Pakistan. All his meetings and his written communications were undertaken by or through me.

I found him to be not only extremely intelligent, a visionary, highly professional, very clear headed and incisive possessing intuitive instincts in his official responsibilities, **but also as a human being, I found him a man of very high caliber who was gifted with the tremendous humane qualities of compassion, kindness and consideration towards everyone**. He was a soft spoken person and I cannot recollect any occasion of his losing temper with anyone or raising his voice in anger, even when it was warranted. Out of the many instances to which I am privy, I will only narrate very few, which reveal only a small part of his unique personality:

**Political Dealings;**

When situation was going awry in erstwhile East Pakistan, one day Mr. Fazlul Quader Chaudhury - a Bengali politician who also served as the 5th speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan, came to see General Farman. I don't know what transpired between the two, but after the meeting when Mr Fazlul was having a cup of tea in my office I found him to be upset, consequently, I enquired from him the reason for his being so visibly disturbed. He immediately burst out - as if he was just waiting to be asked, and said, "General Saab doesn't understand the psyche of these people. I know Bengalis and how to deal with them. **They are either at your feet or at your throat. If he (Gen. Farman) allows me, I can straighten them all in a day. They only understand the language of 'danda' *(use of force)* only, and not the reason and the kindness that General Saab has for them**".

I could see that the General had not agreed to his suggestion of using strong arm methods against the Bengali dissidents.

**Reinstating Civil Aviation Employees;**

There were about 2,000 Bengali employees of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) who had been sacked as they were declared 'grey & black', and were not allowed access to the airports apprehending any possible subversive activity from them. Gen. Farman examined the matter and reinstated all, despite some very strong negative arguments from the CAA and the other related agencies. The General in his legal and just mind, was of the opinion that it was not a case of 'strike', as the employees wanted to come back to work, but the concerned authorities were not allowing them to report on duty on the grounds, that they had been pronounced 'grey and black'. Therefore, Gen. Farman considered the case to be of a 'lock out' by authorities and not of a 'strike' by the employees, as such they could not be dismissed from service. Consequently they were all reinstated w.e.f 25 March 1970 the day 'Operation Searchlight' was launched and the military action had started in East Pakistan. They were to have all arrears of their pays and allowances as well. When I announced this verdict to them on the lawns of Hotel Intercontinental Dacca, **one had to see to believe the expression of tremendous relief joy on their faces, and their shouting of the slogan of Pakistan Zinda Bad**.



4. Lt Colonel S. Riaz Jafri (retd)

**Post Office Savings Accounts;**

There were about Rs. 300 Million (Thirty Crores) in the Post Offices Accounts belonging to the dissidents who had either gone underground or crossed over / taken to India. In their absence the dependents could not be paid any money. General Farman asked the Post Master General (PMG) if there was a way of helping out the poor families of the **misguided Muktis who had absconded – as the General considered Muktis as misguided people, who didn't know what was good for them and were playing in the hands of India**, to which the PMG expressed his inability to do so legally, unless the dependents produced their inheritance certificates - which was a long drawn process. On this General Farman asked me, to issue an MLR (Martial Law Regulation) **authorizing the 'next of kins' to operate the accounts**. ***It was only a personality of the kind of General Farman who could take such a humane and a bold step - even for the families of the Muktis.***

There were many other similar instances where General Farman took courageous decisions keeping in mind the benefit and wellbeing of the East Pakistani Bengalis; which at times could be considered as detrimental to the interest of West Pakistanis. For example, some greedy West Pakistani businessmen in connivance with East Pakistanis, would import machinery on the parity based quota of East Pakistan (mostly textile and leather machinery etc), and then manage to shift it to West Pakistan on one pretext or the other. **On learning this, General Farman put a firm embargo on the shifting of such machinery from East Pakistan to West Pakistan**.

**Hamood ur Rehman Commission Exonerates General Farman of All Charges;**

Nothing could be more conclusive and comprehensive than the Hamood ur Rehman Commission (HRC) report, which was written after not only interrogating hundreds of civilians, civil service and police officials, all Army Commanders, foreign nationals but also cross-examining and cross-checking the statements of the individuals adducing before it. It was only then, that the HRC came to its most considered conclusions and recommendations and in that the commission opined:

> "Maj. Gen. Farman Ali functioned as an intelligent, well-intentioned and a dedicated sincere staff Officer ....."
>
> The Commission goes on to write --
>
> "We are of the view that the performance and conduct of Major General Farman Ali during the entire of his service in East Pakistan does not call for any adverse comment".

**Indian Military Intelligence Exonerated General Farman of the Charge that he had got 200 Bengalis Intellectuals Killed;**

On this I very categorically state, that nothing regarding his involvement of any kind in the elimination of the Bengali intellectuals in the last days of East Pakistan came to my knowledge or notice. I neither saw or ever came to know of any list of the intellectuals to be eliminated being prepared by Gen. Farman, alleged to have been recovered from his desk afterwards. As a matter of fact, he should have asked me – being his senior most staff officer – to prepare or assist him in preparing any such list, which he never did. All visitors going to him used to go through me. As such I invariably knew the purpose/intent/nature of the meeting and the subject matter that would be discussed in it. I never came across any such visitor or know of any such meeting taking place discussing 'intellectuals' and/or any action to be taken against them. I would like to question, were 'intellectuals' taken away or killed from any other city/university/institution other than the Dacca University, also were there no

'intellectuals' at those places? If the purpose of eliminating the 'intellectuals' was to deprive the newly born state of BD of its 'brain', then why were not the 'intellectuals' of other cities/places also eliminated.

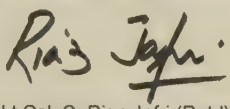
I would also like to mention, that I was informed after repatriation, that General Farman was interrogated in the POW Camp Jabalpur by Brig. Leslie, Director Military Intelligence (DMI) of the Indian Army. The General was asked that he was accused of having 200 Bengali intellectuals killed. In reply General Farman told him to ask General Niazi whether on December 9th he (General Farman) had opposed the arrest and taking any action against these persons or otherwise? Thereafter Brig. Leslie went and met General Niazi, and later he came back, and said "General Niazi has confirmed your statement".

***If Gen Farman was against even arresting the said people, how could he ever order their killing? This allegation is most despicable.***

**Conclusion**

I can go on and on recounting Gen Farman's virtuous deeds towards the East Pakistanis, and it really hurts me when I see someone coming up with anything unkind, inhumane or brutality attributed to him towards the Bengalis. Does anybody understand or know, that **General Farman had no troops under his Command**? He as the DMLA (Civil Affairs and Advisor to the Governor of East Pakistan) was only dealing with the Civil Administration of the province. It is the DMLA (Law & Order) who in order to maintain 'Law and Order' has to have the law enforcing agencies like troops and courts etc under his Command. Since General Farman had none of these under his Command, therefore, he could commit no brutality even if he wanted to. **I would also like to state very emphatically, that even if he had the said resources under his Command, he would never have done or ordered such a horrendous act, as he was a person of exceptional character, was most humane with a remarkably mature and an intellectual mind.**

***May Allah (SWT) rest the departed soul ever in peace in heavens, Ameen.***



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September 29th, 2016

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